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IMPERIAL DESIGNS:  
FASHION, COSMETICS, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY  
IN JAPAN, 1931-1943

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation analyzes how women and gender shaped Japanese imperial culture at home by examining fashion and cosmetics in the 1930s and 1940s. In contrast to conventional narratives of Japanese imperial history that posit Japan's nation- and empire-building projects as separate entities, one extending out from the other, I place women and gender at the heart of my analysis in order to show how nation and empire were mutually constituted through a singular process of colonial modernity. I examine debates on the "national uniform" and ethnic costumes to demonstrate how women functioned as objects in the quest to define Japanese cultural identity, which I argue was shaped through both Japan's semi-colonial relationship with the West and its imperial aspirations in Asia. At the same time, I introduce the figures of Miss Shiseido—an innovative marketing campaign by Japan's leading maker of luxury cosmetics—and Tanaka Chiyo—Japan's first fashion designer—to show how the materiality of fashion and cosmetics enabled individual women to act as subjects with the capacity to shape and transform their world through their consumption practices and the choices they made in assembling their appearance. By analyzing the ways in which critics struggled to respond to shifting ideals of femininity through discourses on women's fashion and cosmetics, I show how women and gender were constitutive of Japanese imperialism and how they expose the incompleteness of Japan's imperial regime.

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## **Introduction**

This dissertation analyzes how women and gender shaped Japanese imperial culture at home by examining fashion and cosmetics in the 1930s and 1940s. The title, *Imperial Designs*, refers to both Japan's imperial ambitions and to the materiality of the fashions produced in prewar and wartime Japan. One of the primary assumptions at the core of this dissertation is that Japan's nation- and empire-building projects were not separate entities, one extending out from the other, but rather they were mutually constituted through a singular process of colonial modernity. I look at discourses on fashion and cosmetics in order to bring into view the fundamental role that women and gender played in constituting Japan's imperial project, functioning as they did as objects in debates concerning Japan's cultural identity. Such debates reveal how Japan's semicolonial relationship with the West and its imperial ambitions in Asia shaped Japanese cultural identity both "at home" and in the empire. At the same time, I utilize the materiality of clothing and cosmetics to show how women acted as subjects with the capacity to push back against these discourses and shape "Japanese" identity through their consumption practices and the choices they made in assembling their appearance each morning.

### **Empire at Home**

Studies of empire, in Japan and elsewhere, have a tendency to operate within a binary of empire and metropole. In the context of British history, for example, Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose have argued that this binary has "allowed for...a historical sensibility portraying Britain as an 'island nation' mostly untroubled by its imperial project."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Andre Schmid has

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<sup>1</sup> Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose, "Introduction: Being at home with the Empire," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan culture and the imperial world*, ed. Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

criticized modern Japanese historiography as “island history;” that is, he asserts that scholarship on modern Japan is too often characterized by “a top-down, metrocentric approach that renders colonial history tangential to the main narratives of the modern Japanese nation.”<sup>2</sup> Following on these critiques, I take nation and empire to be intertwined in a singular project of colonial modernity, which Tani Barlow has defined, in the case of Japan, as “the formation of the Japanese nation-state through the colonization of Asia.”<sup>3</sup> For Barlow, nation and empire were not “positively defined, elemental, or discrete units;” rather, they were intertwined in a “complex field of relationships.” In other words, nation does not precede empire; they are two sides of the same coin.

In order to overcome the tendency to think of nation and empire as separate projects, Antoinette Burton has argued that it is necessary to “recast the nation as an imperialized space – a political territory which could not, and still cannot, escape the imprint of empire.”<sup>4</sup> Louise Young’s work on Manchuria and “Japan’s total empire” has taken up this important issue of “empire building at home” in Japan and demonstrated that the Japanese nation did not exist as a discreet unit while the empire lingered somehow “out there;” rather, they were linked in a dialectical relationship, constantly shaping and being shaped in mutually constitutive ways.<sup>5</sup> This dissertation contributes to this body of scholarship by analyzing how Japanese cultural

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<sup>2</sup> Andre Schmid, "Colonialism and the 'Korea Problem' in the Historiography of Modern Japan: a review article," *Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 4 (2000): 952.

<sup>3</sup> Tani E. Barlow, ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 12. For more on nation and empire as “mutually constitutive projects,” see Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Antoinette Burton, "Who Needs the Nation? Interrogating 'British' History," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10, no. 3 (1997).

<sup>5</sup> Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the culture of wartime imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 14.



identity was shaped through both its semi-colonial relationship with the West – a condition that resulted, in part, from the “unequally treaties” Japan was forced to sign with the West in 1858<sup>6</sup> – and its imperial aspirations in Asia.

The struggle to preserve Japan’s “unique” culture and traditions in the face of Westernization and modernization has been well documented.<sup>7</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, the newly formed Meiji state (1868-1912) sent missions to the United States and Europe to bring back Western ideas and cultural influences in an effort to modernize and avoid being colonized by the West. These missions brought Western ideas about government, law, medicine, the military and education to Japan, laying the foundation for the formation of a modern state, and also introduced Western culture – including food, music, architecture, and fashion – to Japanese consumers, primarily in urban areas.<sup>8</sup> While many critics, bureaucrats, and politicians recognized that this deliberate borrowing from the West was necessary for Japan to accelerate the process of becoming a modern nation, their enthusiasm was eventually tempered by concerns that modernization was leading to Westernization and the loss of Japanese identity.

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<sup>6</sup> Robert Thomas Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The culture of Japanese empire in comparative frame*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 3, Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The unequal treaties and the culture of Japanese diplomacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> For more on the Meiji Restoration and Japan’s encounter with the West, see W. G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1972), Irokawa Daikichi, *The Culture of the Meiji Period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), Marius B. Jansen and Gilbert Rozman, *Japan in Transition, from Tokugawa to Meiji* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), Masao Miyoshi and Harry D. Harootunian, eds., *Japan in the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), Thomas C. Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1959), George M. Wilson, *Patriots and Redeemers in Japan: Motives in the Meiji Restoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> For extended discussions of Japan’s encounter with the West in the Meiji period, see Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the late Meiji period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), Stephen Vlastos, *Mirror of Modernity: Invented traditions of modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

For example, Jason Karlin has shown how these objections were expressed through representations of government officials wearing Western-style suits in mid-Meiji. These “gentlemen” of Meiji were mocked as “high collar” (*haikara*) and criticized for being out of step with the Japanese populace. Their clothes branded them insufficiently “Japanese” and rendered them the “embodiment of superficiality and imitation.”<sup>9</sup> It was these concerns about superficiality and imitation that some feared threatened to rob Japan of its unique cultural identity. In response, Carol Gluck has argued that the concept of “Edo” (1600-1868) was romanticized and reinvented as a “storehouse” of Japanese identity and tradition. She explains, “This Edo-as-tradition offered a cultural space, timeless and unchanging, where the spirit abraded by the masses, machines, and modish modernism could ‘return’ to be refreshed and re-Japaned.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, while modernization was a necessary step for Japan to resist being colonized by the West, the concept of “Edo-as-tradition” emerged in response to concerns that modernization would lead to Westernization and subsequently extinguish Japan’s unique cultural identity.

The need to retain a distinctly “Japanese” identity cannot be understood without consideration of Japan’s imperial ambitions. Establishing cultural authority vis-à-vis colonial others is critical to any imperial project. Edward Said has described the process by which Europeans established authority over the “Orient” through discourses that simultaneously produced the “Occident” against an inferior and exotic “Orient.”<sup>11</sup> In Japan, the process was

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<sup>9</sup> Jason Karlin, "The Gender of Nationalism: Competing masculinities in Meiji Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002), Jason Karlin, "Empire of Fashion: Taste, gender, and nation in modern Japan" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002), 72.

<sup>10</sup> Carol Gluck, "The Invention of Edo," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented traditions of modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

similar, but it was complicated by Japan's cultural affinity with its colonial subjects. Although Taiwan would become Japan's first formal colony in 1895, the Meiji state took the first steps in Japan's empire-building project shortly after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when it sent expeditions to survey the northern island of Ezochi.<sup>12</sup> In 1872, the Japanese state made Ezochi a prefecture, renaming it Hokkaidō, and also annexed the kingdom of Ryūkyū, which it later renamed Okinawa when designating it a prefecture in 1879. Unlike Western imperial powers, Leo Ching has pointed out that Japan's "sense of cultural affinity with its subject peoples made Japan unique among the colonial powers of modern times."<sup>13</sup> The lack of obvious or drastically distinct differences both culturally and racially between Japan and its (potential) colonial subjects made establishing authority a complicated project. Japan took different approaches in different colonial contexts, but it had to negotiate a balance between highlighting racial and cultural links on the grounds of a shared "Asianness" and producing difference that would enable Japan to establish its cultural authority over its colonial others.

In Taiwan, for example, Ching has described the particularities of Japanese colonial rule as it attempted to negotiate its identity as a non-Western imperial power: "The discourse of racial and cultural affinity was incorporated into the overall colonial discourse of assimilation and imperialization at various historical moments to legitimize colonial rule on the one hand, and to differentiate and deter Western imperialism on the other."<sup>14</sup> In the case of Okinawa, Alan Christy has shown that Japan emphasized sameness on the basis of a shared sense of "Asianness"

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Siddle, *Race, Resistance, and the Ainu of Japan* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 24.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

but tried to establish authority over Okinawans by positing Okinawan culture as a primitive subset of Japanese culture:

“Japanese identity was constructed as the sign of a progressive, non-Okinawan identity, while Okinawan identity was produced as a sign of being antimodern and non-Japanese. Situated within a discourse on economic development, a necessarily modernist discourse, the Okinawan identity was produced, as the nonmodern ‘thing which must be swept away,’ so that modernization could fill the void.”<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to Western imperial powers, which were able to establish a distinct break between colonizer and colonized based on racial and cultural discourses of difference, Japan’s cultural affinity with its colonial subjects meant that it had to strike a careful balance between highlighting sameness and establishing difference by articulating Japan’s inherent superiority. In this dissertation, I analyze how the fact of empire shaped debates at home about the cultural identity Japan was projecting to the world, focusing specifically on the struggle to produce an image that was both modern and “civilized” yet distinctly Japanese. In this sense, I take Japan not as a neatly defined, cohesive, and bounded nation from which the empire extended, but rather I look at how Japan and “Japaneseness” were produced through its experience of colonial modernity.

## **Gender and Empire**

I introduce gender as a category of analysis in order to expose the complex process through which “Japanese” cultural identity was produced. Specifically, I analyze how the struggle to define “Japanese” cultural identity played out in discourses on women’s fashion and

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<sup>15</sup> Alan S. Christy, “The Making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa,” in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 147.

cosmetics. The 1920s through the 1940s witnessed lively debate about whether women should wear *yōfuku* (Western-style clothes) and embrace Western ideals of beauty in order to signify to the world that Japan was modern, or whether they should continue to wear *wafuku* (Japanese-style clothes) and embody a traditional Japanese cultural identity. These debates illustrate that women were critical to Japan's imperial project because they were expected to embody a "Japanese" cultural identity that would enable Japan to establish cultural authority vis-à-vis its colonial others. At the same time, the everydayness of clothing and cosmetics were a source of resistance for women against attempts to control their appearance and their bodies.

The association of women with culture and identity is of course not unique to Japan. The "woman question" and the problem of tradition have long been the subject of scholarly debates in other imperial contexts. In colonial India, for example, scholars have argued that the traditional woman was a locus of national cultural identity. In her study of Indian *sati* (widow burning), Lata Mani insightfully observes that under British colonial rule women were conduits for defining tradition in the quest for an Indian national identity. In that context, Mani explains, "Women became emblematic of tradition, and the reworking of tradition was conducted largely through debating their rights and status in society. Despite this intimate connection between women and tradition, or perhaps because of it, these debates were in some sense not primarily about women but about what constituted authentic cultural tradition."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Burton has shown that imperial power was articulated in part through the representation of Hindu women as "pathetic yet romantic subjects trapped at the crossroads of then and now," and that through this process they were secured as "objects of the accelerating, nostalgic desire for the traditional

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<sup>16</sup> Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The debate on SATI in colonial India," *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 121-22.

woman which is among the many contradictions at the ideological heart of modernity.”<sup>17</sup>

Japanese women functioned in a similar way as objects in the discourses on women’s fashion and cosmetics; however, there was a critical distinction between Japanese discourses and those in colonial India. In Japan, critics expressed not only a nostalgic desire for the traditional woman but also a progressive longing for the modern woman. It is precisely through analyzing this ambivalence that the connection between Japan’s quest for a unique cultural identity and its project of empire becomes visible.

The struggle to keep women in place and maintain the existing gendered social order was perhaps nowhere more evident than in discourses on the Modern Girl in the 1920s and 1930s. The *moga* challenged conventional norms of femininity through her appearance and her deviant behavior. She frequently wore kimono with her *obi* pulled up high to expose her legs as if to spurn sartorial traditions, or else she wore Western style clothes in a deliberate attempt to challenge conventional feminine norms. Miriam Silverberg has characterized the *moga* as “militant” because contemporary critics regarded her as a threat to traditional feminine ideals and to the gendered social order that undergirded Japanese society.<sup>18</sup> Following Joan Scott, who has argued that “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes,” it is easy to see why the Modern Girl was the source of such

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<sup>17</sup> Antoinette Burton, "The *Purdahnashin* in Her Setting: Colonial modernity and the *zenana* in Cornelia Sorabji's memoirs," *Feminist Review* 65 (2000): 156.

<sup>18</sup> Miriam Rom Silverberg, "The Modern Girl as Militant," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For more on the Modern Girl, see also Tani E. Barlow et al., *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), Barbara Hamill Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2003).

anxiety.<sup>19</sup> By altering her appearance in ways that did not conform to traditional norms of femininity, the Modern Girl threatened to alter the perceived differences between men and women and therefore destabilize the gendered social order. Keeping women in place was thus critical to maintaining order in Japanese imperial society.

My work builds upon this scholarship by focusing not on the Modern Girl, who was a unique cultural phenomenon and represented only a very small fraction of Japanese women, but rather on concerns about what the majority of Japanese women were wearing. I focus on the anxieties expressed by critics and by the state about whether Japanese women should wear *wafuku* or *yōfuku*, and whether they should adopt Western notions of beauty or preserve traditional feminine ideals. I maintain that these discourses reflect concerns about Japan's position vis-à-vis both the West and the Empire and thus bring into view the fundamental interconnectedness of Japan's projects of nation- and empire-building.

## **Women as Subjects**

By focusing on fashion and cosmetics, items that were part of most women's everyday practices, I call attention not only to women as passive objects of discourse but also to women as subjects who shaped Japanese culture, notions of femininity, and the world in which they lived. I take the position that the sources on which my analysis is based were not produced in a vacuum; rather, the anxieties regarding women's appearance were a response to the shifting cultural terrain that women helped shape through choices they made in their everyday lives. As Miriam Silverberg has argued, we cannot distinguish between the producers and consumers of

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<sup>19</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 42.

culture because “production presumes consumption, and vice versa.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Sherry Ortner has noted that studies that focus entirely on discourse typically fail to account for the experience of the individuals being represented: “It seems to me grotesque to insist on the notion that the text is shaped by everything but the lived reality of the people the text claims to represent.”<sup>21</sup> Although this dissertation is a historical study that focuses on archives, the materiality of clothing offers opportunities to explore the capacity of subjects to “sustain or transform their social and cultural universe.”<sup>22</sup>

In her study of American women’s consumption practices, Kristin Hoganson has demonstrated how material culture – household decoration, fashion, food, travel, and folk arts – can be usefully employed to demonstrate that “empire was not just located out there.”<sup>23</sup> Hoganson illustrates how American women’s consumption practices, in fact, “collapse the distinction between ‘abroad’ and ‘at home’ by showing how they came together in the domestic realm of the consumers’ imperium.” Through their consumption of goods from around the world, American women’s homes and their wardrobes reflected the United States imperial status. In this sense, women participated in the production and promotion of America-as-empire through their consumption practices. In the case of Japan, I argue that women shaped ideas about Japanese cultural identity through the choices they made each morning about what clothes to wear, how to wear their hair, and whether to wear makeup. Even if most Japanese women likely were not deliberately pushing the boundaries of conventional ideals of femininity, the choices

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<sup>20</sup> Miriam Rom Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The mass culture of Japanese modern times*, Asia Pacific modern ; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 6.

<sup>21</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal," in *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences*, ed. Terrence J. McDonald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 296-97.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The global production of American domesticity, 1865-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).



they made fueled public debate. Focusing on fashion and cosmetics thus enables us to shift our focus away from women as objects of discourse and account for how they acted as subjects who actively shaped discourse. While I do not suggest that women's fashion choices radically transformed Japanese imperial society, I do seek to show that women participated in the production of Japanese imperial culture through the choices they made in assembling their appearance. In this sense, I show how women both resisted and reaffirmed gendered social norms and in the process helped to transform norms of femininity, thereby highlighting "their capacity...to interrupt, if not to thwart" Japan's imperial project.<sup>24</sup>

Gender has proven to be a useful means of exposing the "precarious vulnerabilities" of imperialism.<sup>25</sup> As Burton states, an analysis of gendered and sexualized social orders enables us to see that "modern colonial regimes are never self-evidently hegemonic, but are always in process."<sup>26</sup> Imperial regimes are inherently unstable and incomplete, constantly shifting and being reconfigured, and gender dynamics are "fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise."<sup>27</sup> By analyzing the ways in which critics struggled to respond to shifting ideals of femininity through discourses on women's fashion and cosmetics, I show how women and gender were constitutive of Japanese imperialism and also how they expose the incompleteness of Japan's imperial regime.

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<sup>24</sup> Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's history of sexuality and the colonial order of things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 97.

<sup>26</sup> Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

## Chapter summaries

I have organized the dissertation into four main chapters. In Chapter 1, I trace discourses on women's clothes in the 1920s and 1930s in order to expose the anxieties critics expressed regarding *wafuku* and *yōfuku*. I focus primarily on the way in which women functioned as objects in debates about Japanese cultural identity. While it was widely accepted that men wear Western-style suits to work, women who wore *yōfuku* risked being labeled unpatriotic and were viewed as a threat to Japanese tradition. But there was little consensus about what women should wear. Even critics who objected to *yōfuku* on the grounds that they were un-Japanese typically acknowledged that they were more hygienic and better for women's bodies than kimono. Critics frequently used the term "double life" to describe women who wore both *wafuku* and *yōfuku* in their daily lives, and some charged that this practice was both wasteful and unpatriotic. I show how this discourse revealed anxieties about Japan's Westernization and loss of identity and demonstrate how this so-called "double life" characterized Japan's experience of modernity. The struggle to decide what Japanese women should wear culminated in the 1940s with the "national uniform" and "standard uniform" projects. Initially intended as a means to manage Japan's dwindling resources and unify people around national identity, the "national uniform" project reveals the complicated relationship of women to the nation – at once excluded from the "national uniform" and yet expected to embody "Japaneseness." Ultimately, the state was unable to come up with a "national uniform" appropriate for women. The failure of the "national uniform" project highlights the incompleteness of Japan's imperial regime and signals women's capacity to shape and reconfirm Japanese ideals of femininity.

In Chapter 2, I shift the discussion to ethnic costumes in order to analyze how the fact of empire shaped ideas of what it meant to be "Japanese" at home and how clothing policies in the

empire helped Japan establish colonial authority. Representations of ethnic costumes contributed to the construction of colonial others as “primitive” against which Japan could define itself as modern and civilized and illustrate how difference was articulated in various contexts. The implementation of clothing policies was one means by which Japan’s colonial regime attempted to demonstrate its colonial authority, but colonial subjects did not passively accept these reforms. I look at ethnic costumes in Korea, China and Manchuria, and the South Seas in order to demonstrate how clothing functioned as both a powerful technology of empire that helped Japan establish its cultural authority and as a material source of resistance against Japan’s imperial regime.

In Chapter 3, I demonstrate that efforts to define Japanese cultural identity were not limited to fashion. I take a close look at how Shiseido, Japan’s leading maker of luxury cosmetics, deliberately crafted a corporate look that was a sophisticated blend of Japanese and Western influences in order to appeal to Japanese audiences. But as Japan expanded into the empire, Shiseido tailored its image to appeal to consumers in various colonial markets, capitalizing on the fact that Japan, and not the West, represented the “modern” for many colonial consumers. This chapter also calls attention to women’s capacity to shape Japanese imperial culture by introducing the figure of “Miss Shiseido.” Introduced as part of an innovative marketing campaign in 1934, Miss Shiseido embodied Shiseido’s image of feminine beauty and brought those ideals directly to consumers as she traveled around the country giving beauty demonstrations and consultations. In addition to being a fashion model and beauty consultant, Miss Shiseido was regarded by men and women within the company as the definitive expert on Shiseido’s products, business practices, and marketing strategy. I demonstrate how Miss

Shiseido became a highly visible example of the professional working woman and in the process challenged conventional notions of femininity.

Finally, Chapter 4 focuses on Tanaka Chiyo, “Japan’s first fashion designer.” Tanaka was raised in a cosmopolitan household where Western cultural influences were intertwined with Japanese customs and traditions. As an adult she studied fashion in Europe and the United States, and she pioneered the role of fashion designer in Japan while working for Kanebo, Japan’s largest textile manufacturer. In addition, Tanaka was a successful entrepreneur, establishing her own dressmaking school where she taught women how to make and wear *yōfuku*. Through countless articles in popular women’s magazines and her participation on committees charged with reforming Japan’s clothing policies, Tanaka spoke out against those who argued that women should embody Japanese “national” identity and instead lobbied for women’s freedom to choose their own wardrobes based on their individual lifestyles, tastes, and body types. Tanaka was an independent woman who traveled around the world conducting research about indigenous clothing practices on behalf of Kanebo and the Japanese states, assembling an impressive collection of ethnic costumes along the way. In this chapter, I examine Tanaka’s life and career prior to the end of the war and show that she was an influential figure in shaping Japanese women’s practices of dress.

I want to emphasize that this dissertation is not meant to be a comprehensive history of women’s fashion and cosmetics in modern Japan, nor is its primary purpose to document changes in Japanese women’s practices of dress during this period. Rather, my focus is on what critics, experts, and other social commentators were saying about what Japanese women should be wearing and how they should look at the height of Japanese imperialism. Using newspapers,

magazines, journals, memoirs, government documents, and corporate records as my primary source materials, I am interested in how the ideological work of Japanese imperialism was carried out, in part, through discussions of women's appearance. But I also am interested in women's capacity to push back and shape those discourses through the choices they made in assembling their appearance. Responding to Burton's call for historians to "understand discourse and reality not as opposing domains but as a vast, interdependent archive," I am interested in how discourses about women's fashion and cosmetics were necessarily shaped by Japanese women's reality.<sup>28</sup> I view the anxieties and ambivalence toward women's clothes as a response to the shifting cultural terrain that women helped shaped through choices they made in their everyday lives. Therefore, my analysis centers on talk about women's physical appearance in order to examine some of the ways in which meaning was produced and circulated.

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<sup>28</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women writing house, home, and history in late colonial India* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 5.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Living the “Double Life:” Gender, Fashion, and Imperial Culture at Home**

In March 1942, Japanese social critic Tanaka Toshio<sup>1</sup> (1914-1953) posed the rhetorical question: “Will the age of mimicry endure forever?”<sup>2</sup> The question was an expression of Tanaka’s frustration with Japan’s tendency not merely to borrow Western culture but to copy it. While Tanaka acknowledged that Japan’s eagerness to embrace Western culture during the Meiji period (1868-1912) was largely responsible for the nation’s swift modernization and industrialization, he was firm in his belief that Japan must now free itself of its dependency on Western culture for the sake of empire. Tanaka warned that failure to produce a “new culture” that distinguished Japan from the West could compromise Japan’s global imperial ambitions. He explained:

“If we do not [create a new culture], then how can we rule Greater East Asia and boast of a global culture? Unless we succeed the age of Western mimicry [that we have engaged in to this point], and improve upon that attitude, then the various peoples of Greater East Asia will likely return to the splendid figure of Western culture that belongs to their previous rulers, and they will not pay sincere respect to us because of our affinity for borrowing. We mustn’t be defeated by the West in the realm of culture.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, for Tanaka, Japan’s legitimacy as an imperial power hinged on its ability to establish a unique cultural identity of its own. Not only was culture the key to escaping Western hegemony

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<sup>1</sup> Tanaka collaborated with Yanagi Sōetsu, who was a founder of the Japanese folk craft (*mingei*) movement, in his work on Okinawa. For more on Tanaka and his work, see Yamada Yōko, “Tanaka Toshio to Okinawa,” *Mingei*, no. 4 (2008). Also, note that all Japanese names are listed according to Japanese convention with family name first and given name second.

<sup>2</sup> Tanaka Toshio, “*Gendai ifuku shiron*,” *Kokuminfuku* 2, no. 3 (1942): 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*: 11.

but it also was critical to establishing Japan's authority vis-à-vis its colonies. In this sense, Tanaka framed the unique challenges Japan faced as a non-Western modern imperial power in terms of its ability to produce a cultural identity that was both progressive and yet distinctly non-Western.

Tanaka's observations about culture and empire appeared in an article on the history of modern clothes in Japan for the wartime journal *Kokuminfuku* (National Uniform). Tanaka, who was a leading scholar of Okinawan textiles and a regular contributor to fashion columns in women's magazines in the late 1930s and early 1940s, argued in this piece that the creation of a unique cultural identity depended on whether Japan would be able to design a new style of clothes for women. Debates on whether women should wear traditional kimono or modern Western-style dress emerged as a frequent topic of debate in newspapers and popular magazines in the 1920s. In this chapter, I take up the issue of women's clothing and trace these discourses from the 1920s through the early 1940s. In particular, I analyze how attitudes shifted from an early embrace of modern, Western fashion during the liberal era of "Taisho democracy" in the 1920s, to a more ambivalent position that sought to bring together elements of Japanese tradition and modern rationality in the context of wartime Japan. I show how debates on women's clothes bring into view the struggle social critics waged in an effort to shore up a Japanese cultural identity that was fundamental to Japan's project of imperial expansion and reveal the centrality of women and gender in the production of imperial ideologies.

## Early Encounters with *Yōfuku*

Japanese women's transition to *yōfuku* (Western-style dress)<sup>4</sup> was a slow and uneven process. One can trace the history of *yōfuku* as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and Japan's early encounters with the Portuguese and the Dutch, but the first widespread boom in Western fashion took place in the Meiji period (1868-1912).<sup>5</sup> As part of the “civilization and enlightenment” (*bunmei kaika*) movement in early Meiji, Japan embraced Western ideas and established modern institutions of government, law, education, public health, and the military, among others, in an effort to fend off Western imperial powers and establish itself as a modern nation-state in its own right. The adoption of Western ideas extended to cultural imports as well, including art, architecture, music, and fashion.

Japanese men were the first to adopt *yōfuku*. This transition was encouraged in part by the military's use of *yōfuku* uniforms, but men of elite status were also early pioneers of Western fashion.<sup>6</sup> As Jason Karlin has shown, male bureaucrats and government officials were frequently mocked and criticized in newspapers because they had abandoned customary Japanese dress in favor of Western suits. For the masses, this extravagance was evidence that the governing elite was out of step with the national body. But, as Karlin argues, the adoption of Western fashions played an important symbolic role: “The Japanese gentleman's cultivation of

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<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, I use the original Japanese term *yōfuku* when referring to Western-style dress. One of the primary aims of this chapter is to demonstrate how experts and critics attempted to redefine the term, as well as the clothes themselves, in their quest to shore up a Japanese cultural identity. At times the term refers to clothes that come from the West, while at other times the term refers to clothes produced in Japan that are loosely based on Western styles. In the latter case, these might be termed “Japanese *yōfuku*,” while the former might be called “Western *yōfuku*.” In the interest of consistency and clarity, I use the original Japanese term throughout.

<sup>5</sup> See Nakayama Chiyo, *Nihon fujin yōsō shi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kobunkan, 1987).

<sup>6</sup> For an extended discussion on military policies during this period, see Sabine Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and social control in modern Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003).



civilization through fashion and manner was...a calculated response to the political need of the state to improve Japan's international status."<sup>7</sup> In other words, through their dress, these officials helped to legitimize Japan as a modern nation-state in the eyes of the global (Western) community.

It would not be long, however, before urban Japanese men began to adopt Western suits in public as a kind of uniform for the salaryman. Early Meiji efforts to adopt *yōfuku* reveal an eclectic pattern of borrowing, with men wearing kimono or *hakama* with top hats and shoes, and other unique combinations. This reflects both an eagerness to embrace new fashions and Western culture as well as the staying power of traditional customs and practices. By the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most urban men had adopted *yōfuku* for work and for going out in public, but upon returning home they typically would change into kimono for comfort. This practice continued on a fairly wide scale until as late as the 1960s.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, *yōfuku* were not as readily embraced by women as they were by men during this initial boom in Western fashion. As with men, *yōfuku* were limited almost exclusively to women of the elite class during the Meiji period. The most visible example of this took place in what is often referred to as the Rokumeikan era (1883-87), named after the social hall in Tokyo where Meiji elites hobnobbed with foreign dignitaries at balls, formal dinners, and other social events. It was a showcase of modern Japanese "civilization" and of Japan's ability to keep pace with the cultural standards of the West. Women at these events often dressed in the bustle-style

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<sup>7</sup> Jason Karlin, "The Gender of Nationalism: Competing masculinities in Meiji Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28, no. 1 (2002): 44.

<sup>8</sup> See Koizumi Kazuko, *Shōwa no kimono* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 2006), 135-37, Tsurumi Kazuko and Fujimoto Kazuko, *Kimono jizai*, Shohan. ed. (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 1993), 20-23. In both of these texts, the authors recount memories of their fathers and husbands wearing suits to work and kimono at home from the 1920s and into the 1960s.

dressess that were popular in the West, and they wore the latest hairstyles introduced from Europe and the United States. All of these styles marked a significant departure from traditional norms.

In 1886, the Meiji empress made an important statement by officially adopting *yōfuku* for herself, and she also required that other women at court do the same. The empress issued a statement in which she encouraged Japanese women to wear *yōfuku*, but asked that they do so only with domestically produced materials:

“If we [use domestic resources for *yōfuku*], we will aid manufacturing techniques, advance art, and assist business. In this way the benefits will extend beyond the manufacture of clothing to society at large.... This is my sincere aspiration for the reform of women’s dress.”<sup>9</sup>

The empress thus extended her decision beyond the realm of fashion and linked women’s clothes with the aims of the nation.<sup>10</sup> But, in spite of the empress’s urgings, this initial boom in *yōfuku* for women was short-lived and remained confined primarily to the upper class.

It is important to point out here that as this process of understanding and adopting *yōfuku* was taking place, “kimono” or Japanese-style clothes (*wafuku*) were also being defined. The tendency to speak of *wafuku* and *yōfuku* in binary terms has been naturalized in scholarship in both Japanese and English, largely because these terms came into use very early on and were widely used in contemporary discourses. What this binary obscures, however, is the plurality of what we now understand as “kimono,” not to mention the variety of “Western-style clothes.” As Liza Dalby has pointed out in her comprehensive study of kimono, the term “kimono” as a single

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in Liza Carihfield Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning culture* (Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 2001), 82.

<sup>10</sup> See Ibid, Sally Ann Hastings, "The Empress' New Clothes and Japanese Women, 1868-1912," *Historian* 55, no. 4 (1993).

object of clothing did not emerge until *yōfuku* were introduced.<sup>11</sup> The term “kimono” literally translates as “things worn,” and Dalby explains that innumerable kinds of garments that now fall under the umbrella of “kimono” were once identified by distinct names that typically described the shape of the article (e.g. *kakusode* “square sleeve;” *nagasode* “long sleeve”) or its purpose (e.g. *uwagi* “outermost wear;” *haregi* “fancy wear”). Today, “kimono” generally refers to *kosode* (small sleeve), which Tsurumi Kazuko explains was traditionally worn primarily by city dwellers and not by women in rural villages.<sup>12</sup> Thus, it is important to acknowledge at the outset that the generalizing categories of *wafuku* and *yōfuku* disguise pluralities of design, class, geography, and origin. At the same time, this binary was quickly naturalized in the Meiji period, and *wafuku* came to represent an essentialized Japanese cultural tradition while *yōfuku* signified modern, Western cultural styles and practices.

### ***Yōfuku* and Taishō Democracy**

By the 1920s, a number of factors contributed to a second boom in *yōfuku* among Japanese women, this time more widespread. The decade or so from the mid-1910s through the mid-1920s, or the period commonly referred to as “Taishō Democracy,” ushered in a new era of liberalism and modernism.<sup>13</sup> The boom in Japanese exports during World War I resulted in sharp increases in consumption, and magazines, movies, and department store displays exposed

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<sup>11</sup> Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning culture*, 59-63. See also Tsurumi Kazuko and Fujimoto Kazuko, *Kimono jizai*, 126-31.

<sup>12</sup> Tsurumi Kazuko and Fujimoto Kazuko, *Kimono jizai*, 127.

<sup>13</sup> Taishō is the imperial reign name for the period 1912-1926, but scholarship on the period of “Taishō democracy” typically extends beyond the official end of the Taishō emperor’s reign. See Bernard S. Silberman, Harry D. Harootunian, and Gail Lee Bernstein, *Japan in Crisis: Essays on Taishō democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974), Elise K. Tipton and John Clark, eds., *Being Modern in Japan: Culture and society from the 1910s to the 1930s* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000).

Japanese women to new images and ideals of beauty and femininity introduced from the West.<sup>14</sup> American culture, in particular, was admired as the pinnacle of modern culture. This combination of increased consumption and exposure to Western fashions enabled non-elite women to experiment with *yōfuku*.

In addition, new concerns about the overall health of the national body made women's physical bodies and their reproductive capabilities a central concern for the state. This prompted new enthusiasm for *yōfuku* based on the belief that they allowed for greater freedom of movement and did not harm women's bodies in the way that many argued kimono did. Critics of *wafuku* specifically took aim at the kimono sash (*obi*), arguing that it bound women's chests, making it difficult to breathe and causing permanent damage to their spines.<sup>15</sup> Following World War I, Japanese bureaucrats and politicians observed the active role that European women had played in the war and realized that Japanese women had the potential to "double the national strength."<sup>16</sup> This led to new policies aimed at promoting women's health. To that point, state policies on health and hygiene had been targeted primarily at regulating men's bodies, due in large part to military conscription.<sup>17</sup> But new awareness about the value of female bodies to the state converged with popular eugenic ideas about reproduction, resulting in heightened concerns

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<sup>14</sup> For an excellent discussion of consumption, modernism, and *Amerikanizumu* (Americanism) during this period, see Barbara Hamill Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2003), 27-32.

<sup>15</sup> For some examples that specifically address the issue of kimono and women's bodies, see Fujimura Toyo, *Gakkō taiikuron* (Tokyo: Issaisha, 1930), Kamibayashi Eita, *Joshi taiiku kyōkasho* (Tokyo: Kinoshita Seisakujo, 1928), Mihashi Yoshio, *Joshi kyōgi* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1924).

<sup>16</sup> Sheldon Garon, "Women's Groups and the Japanese State: Contending approaches to political integration, 1890-1945," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19, no. 1 (1993): 24.

<sup>17</sup> Frühstück, *Colonizing Sex: Sexology and social control in modern Japan*, Narita Ryūichi, "Mobilized from Within: Women and hygiene in modern Japan," in *Women and Class in Japanese History*, ed. Hitomi Tonomura, Anne Walthall, and Haruko Wakita (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan Press, 1999).

about maintaining women's health for the sake of the overall health of the national body. In 1920, the Ministry of Education initiated a series of Daily Life Improvement Campaigns (*Seikatsu kaizen undō*) that were aimed at improving the overall quality of life for citizens. Special emphasis was placed on nutrition and hygiene, and housewives were encouraged to “sweep away the evil customs” of the past by adopting *yōfuku* because they were more economical and hygienic than traditional kimono.<sup>18</sup>

For their part, physical education instructors were fierce and outspoken opponents of *wafuku*. They argued that the combination of the kimono's long sleeves and the binding *obi* limited schoolgirls' ability to participate in exercises in their school physical education classes, thereby compromising their overall health.<sup>19</sup> They framed their arguments for the adoption of *yōfuku* uniforms in terms that spoke to the state's concerns about the health of the national body, placing special emphasis on women's reproductive capabilities and their role as mothers. According to one prominent expert, the five principal aims of women's physical education were to ensure that a woman's pelvis developed properly, to facilitate birth, to ease menstruation and recovery after giving birth, to make better mothers, and to enhance physical beauty.<sup>20</sup> Such arguments quickly led to the adoption of *yōfuku* as exercise uniforms, and by the end of the decade most of the nation's higher schools for girls had made the switch to *yōfuku*, even in rural areas.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sheldon Garon, *Molding Japanese Minds: The state in everyday life* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 129, Nakayama Chiyo, *Nihon fujin yōsō shi*, 360-61.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the role of physical education instructors in transition to *yōfuku* uniforms for schoolgirls, see Takahashi Ichirō, ed., *Burumā no shakaishi*, Seikyūsha Library (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Kamibayashi Eita, *Joshi taiiku kyōkasho*, 17-19.

<sup>21</sup> In 1919, Yamawaki Girls' Higher School became the first school to adopt Western-style uniforms. Within a few years the school introduced the sailor uniforms that remain popular throughout Japan today. By 1933, the sailor uniform had become so commonplace that Yoshida

Eugenicists expressed similar concerns about the harm that *wafuku* inflicted on women's bodies and tended to be enthusiastic proponents of *yōfuku*. Ichikawa Genzō, a eugenicist and a leader in women's education, argued that *wafuku* resulted in poor posture, prevented women from working and exercising, and were suited "only to prostitutes." While Ichikawa acknowledged that certain elements of *yōfuku* were not ideally suited to Japanese women's tastes, lifestyles, and body shapes, in the end he argued that it was critical for Japanese women to adopt *yōfuku* as part of a "global lifestyle."<sup>22</sup> In this sense, Ichikawa posited women's adoption of *yōfuku* as a necessary measure both in terms of women's reproductive health and as a means for Japan to enter into the global community.

Such concerns about the health of women's bodies were not limited to eugenicists and state actors but appeared elsewhere in the popular press. Osaka journalist Ōba Kakō, who wrote for both the *Asahi* and *Yomiuri* newspapers, encouraged women to wear *yōfuku* because they allowed for greater "alacrity of movement" (*dōsa no binkatsu*) than *wafuku*.<sup>23</sup> Ōba viewed freedom of movement as essential for any "civilized" society and criticized the *obi*, which he likened to a camel's hump, because it threatened women's overall health. For Ōba, the aesthetic lure of the *obi* prevented women from adopting *yōfuku*, and he argued for its total elimination because, as he reasoned, "giving an *obi* to a woman is like giving booze to an alcoholic." Like

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Kenkichi remarked that they "no longer stand out." See Fujingahō, ed., *Fasshon to fūzoku no shichijūnen* (Tokyo: Fujin gahō sha, 1975), 47, Takahashi Ichirō, ed., *Burumā no shakaishi*, Uchida Shizue, ed., *Jogakusei techō: Taishō, Shōwa, otome raifu* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo Shinsha, 2005), 76-81, Yoshida Kenkichi, "From Ginza's Venice Fair," *Asahi Graph*, 6 December 1933. For a discussion of schoolgirl fashions in Meiji, see Rebecca Copeland, "Fashioning the Feminine: Images of the modern girl student in Meiji Japan," *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, no. 30-31 (2006).

<sup>22</sup> Ichikawa Genzō, "*Joshi fukusō kairyō no kyūmu*," *Gendai*, October 1921.

<sup>23</sup> Ōba Kakō, "*Kairyōfuku batōron*," *Fujin kōron* 1920.

Ichikawa, Ōba linked *yōfuku* with both the health of women's physical bodies and the nation's "improvement and progress."

In addition to being better for women's health, many viewed *yōfuku* as generally more practical than *wafuku*. In 1921, the *Yomiuri* Newspaper encouraged Japanese women to wear *yōfuku* because they were economical (*fukeizai de aru*), and frowned upon women who mixed *wafuku* and *yōfuku* in their wardrobes.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in 1924, *Yomiuri* profiled Tsukamoto Hiko because she had lived her entire life without ever having worn kimono.<sup>25</sup> The headline lauded Mrs. Tsukamoto as a "beauty in Western-style clothing" (*yōsō bijin*), and praised her for fully embracing a "Western lifestyle" (*yōsō seikatsu*). The article explains that Mrs. Tsukamoto was raised in a family that wore only *yōfuku*, so she knew very little about kimono, and quoted her as saying that she admired the "feminine" look (*onnarashii*) of the Japanese women she saw dressed in kimono, but because she understood that mixing the two styles was not economical she had resisted the urge to wear kimono herself. In this sense, the newspaper presented Mrs. Tsukamoto as a model of modern, rational living because she had wholeheartedly embraced *yōfuku*.

*Yōfuku* gained tremendous popularity among large numbers of Japanese women following the disaster of the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake, which destroyed much of Tokyo and Yokohama, many men and women, having lost their homes, were quite literally left with nothing but the clothes on their backs. In response to a shortage of clothing, the loose-fitting dress known as *appappa* was introduced from

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<sup>24</sup> Matsu'ura Takeo, "Nijū seikatsu yori mo shufu no atama no mondai," *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 22 June 1921.

<sup>25</sup> "Osanai toki kara wafuku wo kinai yōsō bijin no Tsukamoto Hiko san," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 14 September 1924. Although the article does not indicate her age, the photograph included with the article suggests that Mrs. Tsukamoto was likely in her mid-thirties at the time.

Osaka, where housewives had already begun to wear this garment in summer, because it was simple, inexpensive, easy to clean, and more hygienic than kimono.<sup>26</sup> The *appappa*, which fell into the category of *yōfuku*, was initially a quick fix for thousands of women who had survived the earthquake. But, the dress soon gained wide appeal among women across the country due to the fact that it was cooler than *yukata* (summer kimono) in the hot summer months. By the end of the decade, the *appappa* had become standard summer wear for large numbers of women.

### The Modern Girl

In the years following World War I, proponents maintained that *yōfuku* were better for women's overall health and hygiene than *wafuku* because they symbolized Japan's overall progress as a modern nation. The *appappa* was a cheap alternative that allowed many women to experience *yōfuku* for the first time. At the same time, critics of *yōfuku* contended that they represented a threat to traditional norms and practices. Such concerns were most clearly articulated in discourses on the Modern Girl. The Modern Girl (*moga*) heightened the visibility of *yōfuku* more than any other female figure during the 1920s.<sup>27</sup> First appearing in popular

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<sup>26</sup> The origins of the term *appappa* are unclear, but some speculate that it is derived from the English term "upper part." See Inoue Masahito, *Yōfuku to Nihonjin: Kokuminfuku to iu mōdo* (Tokyo: Kōsaidō, 2001), Koizumi Kazuko, *Yōsai no jidai: Nihonjin no ifuku kakumei* (Tokyo: OM Shuppan, 2004), 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Barbara Hamill Sato, "The Moga Sensation: Perceptions of the odan garu in Japanese intellectual circles during the 1920s," *Gender and History* 5 (1993), Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan*, Miriam Rom Silverberg, "The Modern Girl as Militant," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), Miriam Rom Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense: The mass culture of Japanese modern times*, Asia Pacific modern ; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), Alys Weinbaum et al., *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, modernity, and globalization* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008). For a discussion of the influence of the Modern Girl on fashion in Japanese, see Takahashi Haruko, *Kindai Nihon no shinsō bunka: "shintai to yoso'oi" no bunka henyō* (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2005), 255-65.



media in 1923, the Modern Girl embodied the modern, liberal spirit of the age. Yet the Modern Girl came under fire because she challenged traditional norms of femininity through her fashion choices, consumption practices, and her transgressive lifestyle. Sometimes dressed in kimono, with *obi* tied high above her waist in an unconventional manner that exposed her legs, the Modern Girl also frequently appeared dressed in *yōfuku* with bobbed hair. The Modern Girl was ubiquitous in popular media throughout the 1920s, appearing in countless magazines, advertisements, newspapers, and even in department stores as “Mannequin Girls” who modeled the latest fashions, both Western and Japanese, for customers.

Nearly all of the press coverage the Modern Girl received was negative, and criticisms cited not only her fashion choices but also her physical comportment as factors that threatened to undermine traditional norms of femininity. For example, in 1927, the *Yomiuri shinbun* criticized the Modern Girl because she “walked like a man...with long strides and her feet pointing outward.” The article continued: “The gravest concern is her gait and the way she carries herself.”<sup>28</sup> The way the Modern Girl walked rendered her unfeminine, and her association with *yōfuku* made her a threat to traditional norms.<sup>29</sup> The fact that the Modern Girl defied traditional practices of dress, both by wearing *wafuku* in unconventional ways and by simply wearing *yōfuku* at all, threatened to disrupt the illusion that women embodied an essentialized “Japanese” identity.

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<sup>28</sup> “*Watashi no mita modān gāru*,” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 30 June 1927.

<sup>29</sup> Kon Wajirō and Yoshida Kenkichi were well-known proponents of *yōfuku*, but in their commentary on the Modern Girl they similarly suggest that *yōfuku* are unfeminine. In the early 1930s they compared women dressed in *yōfuku* to “sportsmen” based on their appearance and on the way they walk and hold their accessories. For examples of their commentary, see Kon Wajirō, Yoshida Kenkichi, and Nii Itaru, “The Capital's Diverse Styles,” *Asahi Graph*, 2 November 1932, Yoshida Kenkichi, “From Ginza's Venice Fair.”

Without question, the Modern Girl was a highly visible figure who played an important role in transforming notions of femininity in the popular imagination. But, as Miriam Silverberg has shown, the discourse on the Modern Girl was “more about imagining a new Japanese woman than about documenting social change.”<sup>30</sup> As critics struggled to make sense of the Modern Girl and redefine “woman” in the face of changes brought about by the quest for modernity and exposure to Western culture and fashion, generally speaking Japanese women’s practices of dress underwent surprisingly little change.<sup>31</sup> In his well-known survey from May 1925, Kon Wajirō, professor of architecture at Waseda University and one of the foremost observers of Japanese modernity, found that only 1% of his sample of more than one thousand women in Tokyo’s Ginza district were wearing *yōfuku*; this in spite of the fact that Ginza was arguably the center of modern Western culture and fashion in all of Japan.<sup>32</sup> In 1926, the luxury cosmetics maker Shiseido surveyed passersby in front of its Ginza storefront and found that only 22 of the 516 Japanese women in its sample were wearing *yōfuku*, a total of about only 4%.<sup>33</sup> Such results are evidence that the Modern Girl did not usher in an era of *yōfuku* for most women, but she was nevertheless a powerful agent who embodied changing attitudes toward and ideals of feminine beauty, behavior, and dress.

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<sup>30</sup> Silverberg, “The Modern Girl as Militant,” 250. For an insightful discussion of the Modern Girl as transnational phenomenon, see Tani E. Barlow et al., “The Modern Girl around the World: A Research Agenda and Preliminary Findings,” *Gender and History* 17, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>31</sup> Tani Barlow, along with most feminist historians, emphasizes the instability of the category “woman” and argues that it is the task of feminist history to analyze how the “norm of women” was constantly being “imposed, escaped, superimposed, displaced, reimposed, or perhaps exhausted.” For more, see her Introduction in Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*, Next wave (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> See volume 1 of Kon Wajirō, *Kon Wajirō shū*, 9 vols. (Tokyo: 1971).

<sup>33</sup> Shiseido, “*Ginza o aruku*,” *Shiseidō Geppō*, January 1927.

## Living the “Double Life”

While proponents of *yōfuku* reasoned that they were healthier, more hygienic, and more practical than *wafuku*, criticisms of the Modern Girl revealed mounting anxieties about the potential of *yōfuku* to erase Japan’s distinct culture and traditions. Of greater concern, however, was the increase of non-Modern Girls who began to mix *yōfuku* and *wafuku* in their everyday wardrobes. Such women were widely accused of living “double lives” (*nijū seikatsu*).<sup>34</sup> The term “double life” first appeared in the early 1920s to describe the blending of Japanese and Western styles, particularly in reference to fashion and architecture, and remained part of popular discourse until at least as late as the 1980s.<sup>35</sup> In terms of clothing, references to the “double life” were nearly always directed at women, such as those who wore *appappa* in the summer months and kimono the rest of the year. The most common criticism of the “double life” in the 1920s was that it was not economical. In the years following the Daily Life Improvement Campaigns, which emphasized frugality in the interest of the nation, critics frowned upon what they saw as women’s wasteful spending on both *wafuku* and *yōfuku*. Furthermore, there were also concerns that the “double life” might lead to a loss of Japanese culture and identity. In 1924, Hoashi Ri’ichirō argued that the “mysterious double life” (*nue teki nijū seikatsu*) was an expression of Japanese people’s “spiritual double life” (*seishin teki nijū seikatsu*).<sup>36</sup> As a result, many social critics condemned the “double life” and urged women to commit entirely to either *yōfuku* or

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<sup>34</sup> Harry Harootunian has credited Watsuji Tetsurō for introducing the term in the early 1920s. For a detailed discussion of Watsuji’s views on “double life” see Harry D. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, culture, and community in interwar Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000). See also Irwin Scheiner, *Modern Japan: An interpretive anthology* (New York, Macmillan, 1974), Jeffrey Wu, “The Philosophy of As-Is: The ethics of Watsuji Tetsurō,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 1 (2001).

<sup>35</sup> Edward Seidensticker, *Low City, High City: Tokyo from Edo to the earthquake*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1983), 90.

<sup>36</sup> Hoashi Ri’ichirō, *Shakai to jinsei* (Tokyo: Shinseidō, 1924), 362.

*wafuku*, depending on the individual's point of view. More often than not, critics of the “double life” were advocates of *yōfuku* on the basis of their financial practicality.

In spite of these early objections to the “double life,” by the end of the decade opinions had begun to waver and were characterized by an underlying ambivalence about what women should wear. While many objected to the “double life” on the grounds that it was not economical, others believed it to be an inevitable effect of Japanese modernity. In 1929, Shiseido president, Fukuhara Shinzō, struggled to come to any definitive conclusion about the matter.<sup>37</sup> On the one hand, he hoped that Japanese women would one day be “liberated” (*kaihō*) from the tiresome mixing of styles that defined the “double life.” On the other hand, Fukuhara acknowledged the importance of holding on to the kimono as the basis of an “Oriental” (*Tōyō*) cultural identity.<sup>38</sup> Fukuhara's ambivalence toward the “double life” arose from his awareness that the end of the “double life” would inevitably mean that Japanese women would abandon kimono in favor of *yōfuku*, but he recognized that this was a necessary development for Japan as it aspired to compete with the modern empires of the West. At the same time, Fukuhara identified the kimono as a symbol of Japanese cultural identity and emphasized its importance to Japan's project of empire. Fukuhara accepted the “double life” as a necessary evil that enabled Japanese women to straddle two different cultures in the interest of helping Japan achieve its imperial ambitions. In this sense, the “double life” was the effect produced by a non-Western

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<sup>37</sup> My references here are to Fukuhara's essays as they appeared in a single volume published by Shiseido in 1930. Fukuhara Shinzō, *Shinpen fūkei* (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1930), 32-36. Fukuhara Shinzō (1883-1948) was the son of Shiseido founder Fukuhara Arinobu and became the company's first president upon completing his studies at Columbia University in New York in 1913. For more about Shinzō, see his biography: Yabe Nobutoshi, *Fukuhara Shinzō* (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1970).

<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that Fukuhara also finds Chinese clothes to be quite similar to Western-style clothes, and he believes that Korean clothes are the “most ideal clothes in the world.”

imperial power that was attempting to modernize while still preserving its own cultural traditions for the sake of establishing cultural authority vis-à-vis its Asian neighbors.

### ***Yōfuku* and Wartime Culture in the 1930s**

By the start of the 1930s, the liberal spirit of Taishō democracy had come to an end and was replaced by an increasingly militarized regime. The Great Depression slowed consumption in Japan as it did elsewhere, giving way to new concerns about the economy at both the national level and in individual households. Furthermore, Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, which marked the beginning of what would become Japan's Fifteen-Year War, heightened the atmosphere of war in the metropole and gave rise to an emerging spirit of nationalism.<sup>39</sup>

Although this did not bring consumption and enthusiasm for Western culture to a complete halt, the combination of difficult economic times and heightened militarism at home nevertheless shaped attitudes about what women should wear in a time of war. While most critics agreed that *yōfuku* were more practical for women than kimono, they also shared an implicit awareness that the kimono symbolized a unique Japanese identity and were hesitant to steer women away from this in favor of foreign fashions. The kimono represented Japanese culture and tradition, and preserving it was critical in light of Japan's aspirations for imperial expansion throughout Asia. Thus, while trends continued toward *yōfuku*, particularly in the form of uniforms for work and school, experts and critics struggled to make sense of what women should wear in the interest of Japan's expanding empire.

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<sup>39</sup> Miriam Rom Silverberg, "Advertising Every Body: Images from the Japanese modern years," in *Choreographing History*, ed. Susan Leigh Foster (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 130.

In fact, the number of women wearing *yōfuku* at the start of the 1930s remained quite small, but overall interest in *yōfuku* continued to rise due to a number of factors. In April 1931, Kon Wajirō again conducted a survey of women's fashion, this time in Tokyo's three major centers. He found that only 2% of women in Ginza were wearing *yōfuku*, 1.5% in Shinjuku, and a mere 0.3% in Asakusa.<sup>40</sup> In spite of these low numbers, Kon explained that visitors to the countryside had reported that the number of rural women wearing *yōfuku* was on the rise. This comment may have been a reference to the *appappa*, which continued to enjoy widespread popularity among women across the country during the warmer months. A spread in the *Asahi Graph* in August 1932 depicted women from all walks of life in Osaka wearing *appappa*, and an English caption explained, "Any change in attire of women causes a shock, but not in summer, especially when it is so unbearably hot. As a matter of fact, most of the Japanese women, if not all, seem to have determined to wear what is called 'appappa'...to escape from the heat-wave."<sup>41</sup> For many women, the *appappa* was the only trace of *yōfuku* in their wardrobes, but it was nevertheless evidence that *yōfuku* had begun to creep into the everyday lives of Japanese women.

The so-called "Shirokiya Incident," in 1932, was a highly publicized tragedy that called attention to the kimono's shortcomings and prompted many women to adopt Western-style undergarments.<sup>42</sup> In this incident, female employees dressed in kimono were trapped on the fifth floor of Tokyo's Shirokiya department store when the building caught fire. Newspapers reported that many of these workers died in the fire because they did not want to leap from the building for fear that they would expose their undergarments to those on the ground. While this incident

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<sup>40</sup> Kon Wajirō, "Yōfuku no Ginza," *Asahi Graph*, 27 April 1932.

<sup>41</sup> "The *appappa* Unit Invades Osaka," *Asahi Graph*, 24 August 1932.

<sup>42</sup> Nakayama Chiyo, *Nihon fujin yōsō shi*. Anecdotally, in informal interviews I conducted with Japanese women born in the 1920s and 1930s about *yōfuku* in the prewar period, nearly all of the participants began their responses with a reference to this incident. In English, see "Shirokiya's Bargain Day," *TIME Magazine*, 26 December 1932.

has been mythologized in popular discourse, it nevertheless contributed to the subsequent growth in popularity of Western-style “drawers.”

Finally, an explosion in the number of *yōfuku* dressmaking schools that opened in the early years of the decade gave women greater access to knowledge about *yōfuku*, beyond what was already available to them in many stylebooks and popular fashion magazines.<sup>43</sup> As Andrew Gordon has pointed out, it was no accident that the appearance of these schools coincided with the increased availability of the sewing machine.<sup>44</sup> Although sewing machines remained too expensive for most households to purchase their own, women had access to them at these schools and at shops that specialized in making and selling *yōfuku*. The teachers and founders of these dressmaking schools played a crucial role in shaping conceptions of and attitudes toward *yōfuku*, not only through the formal education offered at their schools but also as frequent contributors to fashion magazines and other women’s magazines. Recognized as the definitive experts on *yōfuku*, these dressmakers were an important source of knowledge about the subject for Japanese women and many of them became household names.

### ***Hifuku: Clothing the Nation***

In spite of the increased exposure to and accessibility of *yōfuku*, the difficult economic times brought on by the Great Depression, and the general militarization of society, prompted heightened concerns about the direction in which women’s fashion was headed. As a means of charting trends and brainstorming strategies for both men’s and women’s clothing, the Army’s

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<sup>43</sup> Bunka Fashion College and Sugino Dressmaking School were the two largest of these schools, and both remain in Tokyo today. For more on dressmaking schools during this period, see Koizumi Kazuko, *Yōsai no jidai: Nihonjin no ifuku kakumei*, 32-39.

<sup>44</sup> Andrew Gordon, "Consumption, Leisure and the Middle Class in Transwar Japan," *Social Science Japan Journal* 10, no. 1 (2007).

Clothing Division (*hifuku kyōkai*) began publication of its own journal, *Hifuku* (Clothing). The journal first appeared in July 1930 with the stated aim of addressing issues of clothing in the interest of “national defense” (*kokubōjō*), “national economy” (*kokka keizaijō*), and “individual economy” (*kojin keizaijō*).<sup>45</sup> In the journal’s second issue, the editors explicitly distanced themselves from the Modern Girl and her counterpart, the Modern Boy, stating that these figures had been “swallowed up by Americanism” and were “ruled by trends (*ryūkō*).”<sup>46</sup> Thus, from the outset, the journal positioned itself in opposition to popular fashion and staked its claim as a forum for discussions about clothing in the interest of the nation and practicality.

Given this stance, *Hifuku* attracted a surprisingly diverse collection of contributors who represented a wide range of perspectives. The group included educators and social critics, dressmakers and bureaucrats, military personnel and department store managers. It is worth noting that many of the journal’s contributors were the same people who wrote for popular women’s and fashion magazines. Nearly all of the contributors generally shared the opinion that *yōfuku* were superior to *wafuku* in terms of the economy, practicality, and health and hygiene; at the same time, their enthusiasm for *yōfuku* was measured by their collective concerns about losing *wafuku* traditions and the consequences that this might have for the nation’s cultural identity.

According to one contributor, Japan had already adopted Western styles of fashion and architecture to such a degree that upon his arrival in Yokohama, Guglielmo Marconi, the Italian inventor of the wireless radio, reportedly wondered aloud, “This is Japan?”<sup>47</sup> Evidently Japan had been Westernized to the point that Marconi found no immediate trace of “Japaneseness.”

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<sup>45</sup> Minori Nishiya and Rie Mori, “On the Journals ‘*Hifuku*’ and ‘*Senji no honzome*’: Textile dyeing during the Fifteen-Years War, 1931-1945,” *Kyoto Prefectural University Bulletin* (2005).

<sup>46</sup> See also Inoue Masahito, *Yōfuku to Nihonjin: Kokuminfuku to iu mōdo*, 64.

<sup>47</sup> Asahara Rokurō, “*Kimono ni tsuite boku no kansō*,” *Hifuku* 5, no. 3 (1934).



Takebayashi Fumiko shared Marconi's surprise at the changes in Japanese fashion when she returned to Tokyo after having spent eight years in Paris. Shocked and disappointed to find that young women were wearing brightly colored kimono with bold prints, Takebayashi blamed Western influences for the transition away from the traditional kimono aesthetic. For Takebayashi, this was not simply a question of fashion; it was one of identity. In her view, "the kimono is what identifies Japanese women in Europe."<sup>48</sup> By positing the kimono as an obvious marker of Japaneseness in the eyes of Europeans, Takebayashi clearly articulated the fundamental relationship between clothing and Japanese identity.

While none of the contributors to *Hifuku* disputed Takebayashi's basic view that the kimono was an important symbol of Japanese identity, most accepted the reality that *yōfuku* were more practical than the kimono and struggled instead to find suitable and imaginative ways to incorporate them into Japanese women's wardrobes. Ōi Masa, an instructor at Tokyo Art College, based her opinions about women's clothes on feedback she received from her female students. Ōi reported that the students were very proud of the aesthetic beauty of *wafuku*, but that they felt *yōfuku* were better suited to the demands of their everyday lives. Ōi generally agreed with the students' position, but she objected to the ways in which Japanese women tended to copy Western fashions from magazines and "stylebooks." She explained that *yōfuku* in the West were designed specifically for Western lifestyles and therefore needed to be altered in order to meet the specificities of Japanese life: "*Yōfuku* styles are constantly changing, but rather than simply borrowing from foreign 'stylebooks,' I think [we] need to draw on the elements that are best suited to our country's climate, economy, and the demands of the times and make a style of

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<sup>48</sup> Takebayashi Fumiko, "Gendai Nihon fujin no fukusō in tsuite," *Hifuku* 3, no. 1 (1932).

clothing that meets those uses and purposes.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, Ōi was a proponent of *yōfuku*, so long as they could be adapted to Japan’s specific needs.

Others expressed a similar desire to “Japanize” *yōfuku*. Yamawaki Toshiko, an artist and expert on Western fashion, echoed Ōi’s basic views regarding *yōfuku*, but she cited fundamental differences between Japanese women’s bodies and Western women’s bodies as the primary reason why *yōfuku* should not be uncritically adopted.<sup>50</sup> According to Yamawaki, “The critical point here is that Japanese people cannot simply adopt Westerners’ *yōfuku* conventions; rather, Japanese people must establish *yōfuku* customs as Japanese (*Nihonjin to shite*).”<sup>51</sup> By asserting that one could wear *yōfuku* and still be “Japanese,” Yamawaki shifted the location of identity from the clothes to the physical bodies of the wearers. Satō Tomoko, headmistress of the Ladies’ Dressmaking School, shared this basic position and effectively negated the notion that the clothes themselves signify identity by emphasizing the fact that wearing clothes is an *active* process. She explained, “Clothes are something that people wear. They are not necessarily things worn by people. In other words, people are the subjects and clothes are the objects.”<sup>52</sup> In this sense, Satō located identity not in the external appearance of the clothes but at the level of the body and through a self-conscious awareness of one’s identity as a Japanese. For both Satō and Yamawaki, clothes did not define people; rather, it was people/bodies who defined the clothes.

This rhetorical maneuver of locating identity in the individual rather than in one’s clothes made way for *Hifuku* contributors and other social commentators to appropriate *yōfuku* as a form

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<sup>49</sup> Masa Ōi, “Nihon no fujinfuku kairyō in tsuite,” *Hifuku* 3, no. 1 (1932).

<sup>50</sup> In 1947, Yamawaki established the Yamawaki Fashion and Art Institute.

<sup>51</sup> Yamawaki Toshiko, “Gyōsō no fujingata e honnen kara zehi jikkō shitai koto,” *Hifuku* 4, no. 1 (1933). Emphasis added.

<sup>52</sup> Satō Toyoko, “Yōsō fujin no hihan,” *Hifuku* 3, no. 1 (1932).

of “Japanese” clothing. As one critic who favored *yōfuku* explained, “It is critical to put forth some effort to ensure that Japanese women’s clothes, regardless of whether they are *wafuku* or *yōfuku*, symbolize Japanese culture and express the spirit of the [Japanese] people (*minzoku seishin*).”<sup>53</sup> Chigusa Iwako, who founded her own dressmaking school, went a step further by proposing that *yōfuku* become the basis for a national uniform for women.<sup>54</sup> For Chigusa, national unity began with women, and their clothes were an expression of their “patriotic passion.” But, rather than turn to the kimono as the basis for this unity, she explained, “I believe that Japan can take these so-called ‘Western-style clothes’ and use them as the basis for a national uniform for New Japan (*shin Nihon no kokuminfuku*).” Chigusa therefore dissociated “Western-style clothes” from the West and attempted to redefine them as the basis for a new “Japanese” identity.

At the heart of these essays are collective anxieties about Japan’s tendency to mimic the West. These are the same sentiments expressed in the passage by Tanaka Toshio that I cited in this chapter’s introduction, and they mark a distinct departure from the discourses in the age of Taishō democracy. While proponents in the 1920s urged women to embrace *yōfuku* because they were better for their overall health and hygiene, and because they symbolized Japan’s rise to the level of other “civilized” nations, by the 1930s critics were struggling with the possibility that the adoption of “Western-style clothes” might render Japan a mere copy of the West. In response, *Hifuku* contributors attempted to appropriate *yōfuku* as a “Japanese” cultural tradition and began to discuss ways that innovations in women’s clothes could become the basis for a “new culture” that would become the basis of Japan’s cultural identity.

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<sup>53</sup> Senaga Ryōchoku, “Fujin no fukusō ni tsuite,” *Hifuku* 3, no. 1 (1932).

<sup>54</sup> Chigusa Iwako, “Shokugyō fujin no fukusō mo tōsei seyo,” *Hifuku* 4, no. 2 (1933).

Such efforts to redefine “Western” styles as “Japanese” were not limited to fashion. As Jordan Sand has shown, similar debates were taking place in the realm of architecture. Sand examines the work of Tanabe Junkichi of the Everyday Life Reform League who refuted the charge that Western-style architecture was necessarily foreign or borrowed. Tanabe argued that even though a house designed from the inside out may have “brought a result that looked ‘Western style’ on the exterior,” this did not mean that it was an imitation of a Western house; rather, for Tanabe, such a house would “come naturally to resemble a Western house.”<sup>55</sup> By suggesting that Japanese architects arrived at “Western style” designs organically, Tanabe echoed the fashion experts in the early 1930s who argued that *yōfuku* had become “Japanese” and were no longer a mere imitation of “Western-style clothes.”

Significantly, the appropriation of *yōfuku* was frequently framed in terms of broader efforts to define Japanese culture as global culture. Satō reminded readers that *wafuku* had never been a stable category and, historically speaking, Japanese clothes had always been shaped by outside influences from China, Korea, Mongolia, and even the Dutch.<sup>56</sup> In this sense, *yōfuku* represented just one more style of clothing that had to be incorporated into the already global *wafuku*. By locating identity not in one’s clothes but within the individual herself, critics opened up the possibility for women to wear *yōfuku*, as well as other styles of clothing, “as Japanese” (*Nihonjin to shite*).

In 1933, Asaoka Mitsuko, who was headmistress of Chigusa Dressmaking School, encouraged Japanese women to experiment not only with *yōfuku*, but also with clothes from all over the world, including China, Persia, Spain, the Netherlands, and Russia. Like Satō, Asaoka

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<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Jordan Sand, *House and Home in Modern Japan: Architecture, domestic space, and bourgeois culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 365-66.

<sup>56</sup> Satō Toyoko, “Yōsō fujin no hihan.”

argued that it was precisely this eclectic mixing of styles that would become “a significant defining characteristic of Japanese.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, the borrowing of foreign fashions did not have to lead to a loss of Japanese culture so long as women “superimpose[d] an expression of the Japanese spirit (*Nihon no kokoro*)” on them. And, in fact, by wearing an eclectic mix of fashions from around the world, women could become the embodiment of a global culture “as Japanese.” Furthermore, these experts saw in this an opportunity to reverse the flow of culture from Paris and New York to Tokyo and enable Japan to influence the fashions of the West. Given Japan’s status as an expanding imperial power that aspired to compete with the empires of the West, this represented a significant break from Japan’s pattern of borrowing Western culture and signaled Japan’s emergence as a truly “modern” imperial power in its own right.

Underlying these discourses were anxieties about what kind of image Japan was projecting not only to the West but also to Asia, which was the immediate target of Japan’s imperial designs. Critics expressed a desire for Japan to “overwhelm the world” by imagining new styles of *yōfuku*.<sup>58</sup> On the one hand, this was about Japan coming out from under the shadow of Western hegemony and assuming a position as a legitimate imperial power in its own right. At the same time, it was an opportunity for Japan to demonstrate to fellow Asians its cultural authority. Okuda Kazuko, a journalist for the Osaka *Asahi* Newspaper, argued that it was “a matter of urgent business” for Japanese women to do away with their “evil customs” (*rōshū*) because, as she explained, “Now Japan has the eyes and ears of the world as it stands at the center of the giant stage that is East Asia.”<sup>59</sup> Thus, debates on fashion situated women at the heart of Japan’s struggle to negotiate its position as a non-Western imperial power.

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<sup>57</sup> Asaoka Mitsuko, “Ishō yawa” *Hifuku* 4, no. 2 (1933).

<sup>58</sup> Namiki Isaburō, “Nihon fujin no fukusō wo ikan ni subeki ka?,” *Hifuku* 3, no. 1 (1932).

<sup>59</sup> Okuda Kazuko, “Kokumin fukusō no mondai,” *Hifuku* 5, no. 3 (1934): 252.

## ***Yōfuku and Total War***

Japan's invasion of China in July 1937 led to the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the spirit of war quickly came to dominate the popular media. The China Incident (*Shina jihen*), or the so-called Marco Polo Bridge Incident, was a major turning point that shaped representations of fashion in popular discourse. With the nation in a state of "total war," newspapers and magazines addressed the question of what people on the home front should do for the nation in this "time of crisis" (*hijōji*). In October 1937, the state initiated the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement (*kokumin seishin sōdōin undō*) with the aim of maximizing individual contributions to the war effort through cost-cutting measures in individual households and the conservation of critical resources. Clothing was affected by these measures when the government introduced "staple fibers" (*sufu*), a kind of synthetic material designed to replace cotton and wool, which were the most commonly used fabrics for clothes. The state required citizens at home to use material composed of at least 30% *sufu* in order to conserve resources for the military.<sup>60</sup> Unfortunately, these "staple fibers" were at least 10% more expensive to produce than natural fibers and they tended to be far less durable, a point made by many women in popular media.<sup>61</sup> Still, women were encouraged to use these new fabrics in the interest of "patriotism."

In practice, Japanese women remained divided in their views on *wafuku* and *yōfuku*. For example, Kawakita Kashiko told the popular fashion magazine, *Fujin gahō* (Ladies' Graphic), that it was important to preserve the Japanese aesthetic that characterized the kimono, and Teiko Itoh, a dancer who grew up in New York City, told the magazine that in her view the beauty of

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<sup>60</sup> Nakayama Chiyo, *Nihon fujin yōsō shi*, 437, Koizumi Kazuko, *Yōsai no jidai: Nihonjin no ifuku kakumei*.

<sup>61</sup> Itō Mohei, "Hijō no Nihonfujin no fukusō ni tsuite," *Fujin gahō*, October 1937.

*wafuku* “suits Japanese women perfectly.”<sup>62</sup> The magazine also profiled a series of women and asked them to describe their everyday wear (*fudangi*), and all of the women said that they preferred kimono.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile, a 1941 survey conducted by Tanaka Toshio for *Fujin gahō*, revealed that the women in his sample wore *yōfuku* 60% of the time and *wafuku* only 40% of the time.<sup>64</sup> While Tanaka was forthcoming about the fact that his sample was decidedly upper class, the results of this survey nevertheless suggested that *yōfuku* had gained wide acceptance and popularity with certain segments of the population.

More common among non-elite women by the start of the 1940s was a style of clothing known as *monpe*. In spite of the fact that *monpe* resembled a kind of loose-fitting pant, they were actually indigenous to Japan and had been worn by rural Japanese women for centuries. *Monpe* were usually made out of cotton, wool, and sometimes hemp, and they had distinctly Japanese patterns that resembled those found on kimono.<sup>65</sup> In wartime, much of the female population wore *monpe* as a kind of unofficial “national uniform” for women, and magazines provided detailed instructions that showed women how they could modify their old kimono to make *monpe*. In many ways, *monpe* satisfied concerns about how to negotiate between the practical elements of *yōfuku* and the indigenous tradition and aesthetic of kimono. But, as Japan’s war with China began, the question of what to do about Japanese women’s clothes was a source of increasing anxieties.

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<sup>62</sup> "Watashi no kimono," *Fujin gahō*, July 1939.

<sup>63</sup> "Watashi no fudangi," *Fujin gahō* 1939.

<sup>64</sup> Tanaka Toshio, "Gendai josei no fukusō chōsa," *Fujin gahō*, October 1941.

<sup>65</sup> Koizumi Kazuko, *Yōsai no jidai: Nihonjin no ifuku kakumei*.

Immediately following the China Incident, numerous magazines took this up as a critical issue facing the nation in this “time of crisis.”<sup>66</sup> In November 1937, just four months after the start of the war, *Fujin gahō* published a roundtable discussion, entitled “The Problem of Tradition,” in which the participants focused their debate about the fate of Japanese tradition on a discussion of women’s clothes.<sup>67</sup> Kon Wajirō saw the China Incident as a turning point that offered an opportunity for women to make the transition to *yōfuku*, but he also acknowledged that “feelings of longing” for *wafuku* had increased since the start of the war. In his view, it was necessary for Japan to develop its own brand of *yōfuku* that would enable the Orient (*Tōyō*) to exert its influence on Western fashions. Fujita Tsuguharu playfully suggested that Japan sponsor a “kimono day” when all Japanese women would be required to wear a kimono in a mass demonstration of patriotism. Fujita exclaimed: “Wouldn’t foreigners [Westerners] be surprised [to see that]!” Fujita concluded the debate by allaying fears that *yōfuku* signified the loss of tradition: “Tradition is something that is never really lost. Progress is impossible without tradition. We must layer our new ideas on top of the old. Japan’s kimono of old was truly beautiful, but it is not practical to try to preserve that tradition as it was. It is precisely our task to improve upon tradition.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, for Fujita women were the embodiment of *both* tradition and progress. The “problem of tradition” did not have to involve a choice between *wafuku* and *yōfuku*, tradition and progress; rather, the development of a new style of clothes for women would naturally improve upon Japan’s well-established traditions.

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<sup>66</sup> Some examples include Itō Mohei, “Hijō no Nihonfujin no fukusō ni tsuite.”, Machida Kikunosuke, “Nisshi jihen wa josei no fukusō ni ikan ni hanei shite iru ka,” *Sōen*, November 1937.

<sup>67</sup> Kon Wajirō et al., “Dentō no Mondai,” *Fujin gahō*, November 1937.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.



Yoshioka Yayoi agreed with Fujita and Kon that *yōfuku* were a more appropriate choice for women at work, but she argued instead for the elimination of any association of *yōfuku* with the West by doing away with the term “*yōfuku*” entirely. Yoshioka was a well-respected physician and feminist, who was also an officer in the National Spiritual Mobilization Movement. In 1938, she published an article in the magazine *Sōen* (High Fashion), entitled “Where do Japanese clothes go from here? Targeting peace in East Asia.”<sup>69</sup> In this piece, Yoshioka proposed using the term “work clothes” (*sagyōfuku*) in place of the term “*yōfuku*” because she believed that the latter term suggested a sense of “worship” (*sūhai*) for the West. Yayoi was hardly alone in her desire to do away with the term *yōfuku*. One shopkeeper who specialized in *yōfuku* explained that he painted over the characters for “*yōfuku*” on the sign in front of his shop because the term was a source of shame. For him the very term “*yōfuku*” suggested that Japanese were copying the West and he felt that erasing the term would be a step forward in helping Japanese live “as Japanese.”<sup>70</sup>

But Yoshioka argued that there was far more at stake than simply distancing Japan from the West. In her view, it was Japan’s responsibility to imagine a new style of clothing for “all Oriental people” (*Tōyōjin zentai*). In order to accomplish this, she urged Japanese to investigate the benefits of Chinese-style clothes (*Shinafuku*). Yoshioka maintained that Chinese-style clothes were hygienic and had much in common with *yōfuku*, and were therefore a potential starting point for a new style of clothes that would be at once distinct from the West and grounded in Oriental traditions. She explained, “China is regarded as the enemy or as a lesser country, but we must do away with those feelings of disdain and, for the purpose of peace in East

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<sup>69</sup> Yoshioka Yayoi, “Kongo no Nihonjin no fukusō wa doko ni iku? Tōa no heiwa wo mezashite,” *Sōen*, March 1938.

<sup>70</sup> “Yō’ no ji,” *Fukusō Nippon*, May 1941.

Asia (*Tōa*), I hope we can create a style for all Oriental people.” In some ways, this marked a radical departure from decades of proposals that focused primarily on the question of how to integrate elements of *wafuku* and *yōfuku* into a style that was at once modern and distinctly Japanese. But Yoshioka stepped outside of that model by staying within Asia for alternatives. On the one hand, her willingness to use a Chinese style of dress as a model demonstrated a measure of confidence regarding Japan’s position vis-à-vis the Asian continent. On the other hand, the repudiation of *yōfuku* indicated mounting anxieties at a time when Japan was preparing to stand off against the imperial powers of the West. In the interest of empire, Yoshioka urged Japanese to cast aside biases against China and focus their energies on designing a new style of clothing that would be the basis for a style of Oriental clothing. Thus, by imagining an *imperial* identity, Yoshioka envisioned possibilities for Japan to escape Western hegemony and expand its cultural authority throughout Asia.

### **National Uniform**

The struggle to determine what Japanese women should wear in the interest of helping Japan maintain its status as the leader of East Asia culminated in the national uniform (*kokuminfuku*) project. This project was initially intended only for men and was aimed at conserving valuable resources for the war effort and promoting national unity at home. By requiring citizens to wear a particular uniform, the state could regulate the fabrics used in making them and funnel premium resources into the military. But while citizens endured restrictions on what they could wear in the interest of “national defense” (*kokubō*), many were skeptical about the idea of a national uniform.

By the end of 1937, the Cabinet announced formal plans to design a national uniform and charged the Ministry of Welfare with the responsibility of coming up with a design. A year later, in November 1938, the Ministry held its first meeting to discuss the matter and invited more than 80 people from all walks of life to participate in the discussion, including representatives from various arms of the government, the military, the press, business, the fashion industry, youth groups, as well as ordinary citizens.<sup>71</sup> Participants brainstormed ideas ranging from the need and feasibility of such a project to specific design suggestions. In general, participants expressed widespread support for the project as well as their hope that a national uniform would contribute to the “national defense” by helping to control domestic consumption of resources, improving health and hygiene, and promoting social unity. Furthermore, they believed a uniform would help prepare male civilians for full-scale military mobilization in case the war continued to escalate. At the same time, there were dissenting voices. Mitoku Shisui, chairman of the Japanese Army’s Clothing Division (*Hifuku kyōkai*), expressed strong reservations about the idea on the grounds that it might compromise Japan’s global imperial ambitions.<sup>72</sup> Mitoku pointed out that “civilized” countries did not have standardized “national uniforms;” rather, all “First World” countries had a unified “international” (*kokusaiteki*) style that reflected a unique national identity. As a result, Mitoku feared that establishing a national uniform would prevent Japan from achieving an “international” style and reduce it once again to a “Second World” country. Fashion designer Tanaka Chiyo agreed with Mitoku and was alarmed that Japan would become the only country with a “national uniform.” Tanaka claimed that Japan’s “national uniform” was different from Germany’s “Nazi uniform” and Italy’s “fascist uniform” because it was intended

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<sup>71</sup> Published accounts of the committee’s proceedings appeared in the journal *Hifuku* in 1939. See volume 10, issues 1 and 2: “Kokumin fukusō no mondai,” *Hifuku (Clothing)* 10, no. 1 (1939). For a summary of the proceedings, see Nakayama Chiyo, *Nihon fujin yōsō shi*, 437-42.

<sup>72</sup> Mitoku Shisui, “Kokuminfuku ni tsuite,” *Sōen* 1938.

to be a temporary project. While others shared Mitoku's concerns, such views did not obstruct the process and the committee set out to design a uniform that would be practical and reflect Japanese national identity.

There was little debate about the basic design of the uniform. Many urban Japanese men already wore suits to work on a daily basis, so there was widespread agreement that the uniform should resemble a Western-style military uniform. However, many expressed their desire to make the uniform more "Japanese" by "reforming" (*kairyō*) and "improving" (*kaizen*) upon *yōfuku*. This desire to "Japanize" *yōfuku* grew out of concerns that using a Western suit as the national uniform would give the impression (both domestically and globally) that Japan was simply copying the West or aspiring to be "Western." One of the primary aims of developing a national uniform was to promote social unity around the idea of the nation and to have citizens embody a distinctly "Japanese" identity. Therefore, critics maintained that the uniform should be sufficiently "Japanese," however vague that concept may have been.

Members of the committee were keenly aware of the significance of Japan's imperial status as they considered how best to project a Japanese identity that was distinct from the West. One expert argued that the committee must design a style of clothing "befitting the leader of the Orient," and that improving modern *yōfuku* was the best way to achieve this. Another explained that "for the purpose of building East Asia" it was necessary to come up with a design that was effective in terms of "both matter and mind" (*bussnin ryōmen*). And Takeshima Kazuyoshi, who oversaw the committee, explained that a new style of Japanese clothes was necessary in light of Japan's status as an imperial power in East Asia. Takeshima stated his hope that people in East Asia would want to wear a new style of Japanese clothes that would "rank among the clothes of

the civilized countries of the world.”<sup>73</sup> In this sense, the national uniform project was shaped by Japan’s status as a non-Western imperial power.

Ultimately, the Ministry of Welfare, with help from the Army’s Clothing Division, adopted two versions of a pseudo-military style uniform based on the Western-style suit. The designs were announced on January 26, 1940, and the government later issued the “National Uniform edict” (*Kokuminfukurei*) on November 11, 1940.<sup>74</sup> Both styles were “national defense color” (*kokubōiro*), or military khaki, and included a shirt, a jacket, and pants, as well as the option of hats, overcoats, and decorative sashes. The designs were quite similar but allowed men to choose between an open collar or closed collar, belt or no belt, as well as the number of pockets on their jackets.

In spite of the official edict, however, the uniforms were not issued by the state and were not required dress. Patterns for the various designs were published in newspapers and magazines so that (presumably) women could make them at home, and some girls learned how to make the uniforms in their home economics classes at school. In order to encourage men to wear the uniforms, the state established the Greater Japan National Uniform Organization (*DaiNippon kokuminfuku kyōkai*), which was responsible for giving lectures and staging public exhibits at department stores and other public venues in the interest of publicizing the national uniform. The

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<sup>73</sup> Takeshima published an article in *Hifuku* laying out the aims of the *kokuminfuku* project. Takeshima Kazuyoshi, “Fukusō ni kansuru iinkai kaisai made no keika ni tsuite,” *Hifuku* 10, no. 1 (1939).

<sup>74</sup> *Kokuminfukurei*, 725. The complete text of the edict is available online in Japanese at <http://www.geocities.jp/nakanolib/rei/rs15-725.htm> (accessed 7/23/2009). Significantly, the edict did not require men to wear the uniform. It is also worth noting that the announcement of the national uniform coincided with the national Kigen 2600-nen celebration of 1940. This was a year-long series of events and celebrations commemorating the 2600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the mythical Emperor Jimmu’s ascension to the throne, an event that the state and the press heralded as the origin of the Japanese nation. For more on this event, see Furukawa Takahisa, *Kōki, Banpaku, Orinpikku: kōshitsu burando to keizai hatten* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1998).

state also funded the publication of the magazines *Hifuku* and *Kokuminfuku* for the same purpose. Despite these efforts, evidence shows that men did not wear the uniform in great numbers. A survey conducted by Yoshida Kenkichi in 1942 revealed that only 12% of men in a Tokyo sample were wearing the uniform, while 83% of men dressed in regular *yōfuku*, and 5% in *wafuku*.<sup>75</sup> It is difficult to determine just how many men actually wore the uniform, but these numbers suggest that the project was initially met with only limited support from citizens. Still, the government sustained the project through the end of the war, encouraging civilians both at home and abroad to wear the uniform.

### **“Standard Uniform”**

Significantly, the national uniform project was initially intended only for men, and primarily urban men.<sup>76</sup> But after the designs for the men’s uniform were announced in January 1940, the Ministry of Welfare, along with members of the Army’s Clothing Division (*Hifuku kyōkai*) and the Greater Japan National Uniform Organization, began work on a version of the “national uniform” for women. Debates on the matter were largely limited to a choice between *wafuku* and *yōfuku* or some combination of the two and represented the culmination of decades of clothing reform.<sup>77</sup> However, it is important to point out that although many referred to this as women’s “national uniform” in practice, largely because it was an extension of the men’s

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<sup>75</sup> Lisbeth K. Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the politics of folk art in Imperial Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 197, Nakayama Chiyo, *Nihon fujin yōsō shi*, 442.

<sup>76</sup> Ministry of Welfare representative Niwa Kyōshirō summarized early debates about whether to design a national uniform for women in 1938. See Niwa Kyōshirō, “Kokuminfuku to wa...” *Sōen*, July 1938.

<sup>77</sup> For in-depth discussion about contemporary experts and critics views regarding women’s clothing reform in wartime imperial Japan, see “Fujin kairyōfuku iyoiyo gutaika,” *Fukusō Nippon*, May 1941, “Fujin kokuminfuku ni tsuite dō iu goiken wo omochi desu ka,” *Fujin gahō*, June 1941.

national uniform project, the formal name used by the state was actually “*hyōjunfuku*” or “standard clothes,” rather than “*kokuminfuku*” (national uniform), which was the term used for men. As Inoue Masahito has pointed out, this distinction was significant because it was evidence of women’s formal exclusion from the “nation.”<sup>78</sup> The term “*kokumin*” in *kokuminfuku* can signify various meanings in English, including “nation,” “national,” and “citizen.” The fact that women were excluded from the initial “*kokuminfuku*” project suggests the extent to which they were excluded from the “nation” and the category of “citizen.” When the Ministry of Welfare moved on to the task of designing a uniform for women, it used the more neutral term “*hyōjunfuku*,” which carried with it no association with the nation or with citizenship. Some reasoned that it was necessary to use this term because women’s “*hyōjunfuku*” was not actually a uniform; rather, it was a basic design that allowed room for women’s individual tastes in making their clothes. While this may have been true to some extent, men’s “national uniform” was not state-issued nor was it required dress. Furthermore, because individuals were responsible for making their own uniforms based on patterns published in newspapers and magazines, the men’s “national uniform” similarly offered opportunities to incorporate individual tastes into the final product.

The hypocrisy of women’s exclusion from the “national uniform” is notable. In spite of ongoing debates about the need for women to embody a “Japanese” cultural identity through their clothing, when it came to the “national uniform” women found themselves located conspicuously outside the nation.<sup>79</sup> One critic involved in the “national uniform” debates captured the essence of this paradox when he stated that women were “half citizens” (*kokumin*

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<sup>78</sup> Inoue Masahito, *Yōfuku to Nihonjin: Kokuminfuku to iu mōdo*, 7.

<sup>79</sup> In this chapter, I refer to women’s *hyōjunfuku* as the “national uniform,” in quotation marks, both for consistency and because that is the term that critics frequently used when referring to the project.

*no hanbun*) and then went on to emphasize the importance of making their “standard clothes” both “feminine” (*onnarashii*) and “Japanese” (*Nipponteki*).<sup>80</sup> What it meant for clothes to be “Japanese” was a subject of considerable debate, but it was clear that for women being “feminine” (*onnarashii*) was an essential factor in achieving the “Japanese” look.

The desire for women’s “national uniform” to be “feminine” was in part a response to concerns about the growing number of Japanese women who had begun to wear *monpe*.<sup>81</sup> Monpe were indigenous to Japan and had long been worn by women in rural areas, but as the war escalated many urban women turned to monpe out of necessity. The wartime bans on “luxury items” discouraged women from wearing fancy kimono, and limited resources and widespread poverty meant that women had to make do with what they had. Magazines and newspapers instructed women on how to turn their old kimono into monpe. Monpe were also well suited to physical activity, which was of critical importance in wartime, and they were adopted as part of an unofficial “national defense uniform” (*kokubōfuku*) designed for use during air raids.

In spite of the widespread popularity of monpe, many involved in the “national uniform” project criticized them as “ugly” and declared them a “national embarrassment.”<sup>82</sup> Many believed that monpe too closely resembled pants and feared that women’s wardrobe was beginning to look like men’s. Designer Sugino Yoshiko emphasized the importance of maintaining a distinction between male and female dress by asserting that the “unification [of

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<sup>80</sup> "Kokuminfuku ni kan shite shoka no koto," *Hifuku* 11, no. 2 (1940): 46.

<sup>81</sup> For more on *monpe*, see Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning culture*, 131.

<sup>82</sup> Saitō Kazō, *Kokuminfuku no kōan* (Tokyo: Shūhōen shuppanbu, 1939). Inoue Masahito provides an extended discussion of anti-monpe discourses, see Inoue Masahito, *Yōfuku to Nihonjin: Kokuminfuku to iu mōdo*, 215-33.



women's uniform] with men's is unthinkable."<sup>83</sup> Sugino was responding to suggestions by some committee members that men's national uniform be altered to fit women's bodies. Other critics expressed their concerns that monpe were enabling women to be more active outside of the home than ever before. They lamented the fact that women no longer "sat on tatami," a euphemism that described life spent in the home in their capacity as the "good wife and wise mother."<sup>84</sup>

In fact, monpe would have seemed a logical choice for a women's "national uniform." They were indigenous to Japan, practical for physical activity during wartime, economical because they recycled resources, and they were already immensely popular among women. But rather than use monpe as the "national uniform," some critics attempted to deflect the issue altogether by arguing that women's lives were "too complicated" to arrive at a single design.<sup>85</sup> They charged that modernity had altered women's traditional lifestyle so much that they now required different kinds of clothes to do housework, shop, and work. Rather than accept monpe as the obvious choice for the "national uniform," these critics were prepared to dismiss the project entirely.

This resistance to monpe clearly suggests that something important was at stake in the "national uniform" debates. The fact that monpe were perceived as a threat to traditional feminine norms illustrates the extent to which ideologies of gender were foundational to wartime imperial Japanese society. Maintaining traditional notions of femininity superceded not just practicality, which was one of the stated objectives in designing a "national uniform," but even the nation took a backseat to preserving feminine norms in these debates. Monpe were a symbol

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<sup>83</sup> "Kokuminfuku ni kan shite shoka no koto," 42.

<sup>84</sup> For some examples, see "Fujin kokuminfuku ni tsuite dō iu goiken wo omochi desu ka," 126, Kida Suimei, "Fujinfuku hyōjun sutairu no sōan ni tsuite," *Fukusō Nippon*, August 1941.

<sup>85</sup> Kida Suimei, "Kokuminfuku no risō," *Home Life*, February 1939, Tanaka Toshio, "Gendai josei no fukusō chōsa."

of how much Japanese women's traditional role had changed, and critics feared that endorsing this "masculine" style of clothing might further encourage the progressive disintegration of distinctions between men's and women's social roles. In this regard, those who criticized monpe were articulating an underlying awareness of the importance of gender to social stability and the constitutive role that it played in producing and sustaining imperial ideologies.

Ultimately, the Ministry of Welfare chose two different designs for the "national uniform," both of which included skirts. On December 19, 1941, more than a year after the state issued the "National Uniform Edict" and just days after the start of World War II, the *Yomiuri Shinbun* published photographs of prototypes for the designs for a women's "national uniform."<sup>86</sup> An official announcement about these designs issued by the Ministry of Welfare came several weeks later, on February 3, 1942.<sup>87</sup> The designs were the result of work by several committees coordinated by the Ministry, but women across the country also had the opportunity to voice their opinions and offer their input through their own design suggestions. With the help of newspapers and women's magazines, the Ministry solicited 648 design submissions from readers.<sup>88</sup> The final designs were therefore a collaborative effort that incorporated ideas from both experts and the women who the state hoped would be wearing them.

Both designs had a one-piece and a two-piece version. The first design was in the style of "Japanized" *yōfuku*, while the second design was described as "modified *wafuku*." The *yōfuku* design was composed of a skirt and a wrap-around style shirt that vaguely resembled the kimono. This was one of the design elements that was intended to give the uniform a distinctly

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<sup>86</sup> The title of the newspaper article refers to the uniform as the "women's national uniform."  
"Kore ga fujin kokuminfuku," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 20 December 1941.

<sup>87</sup> See "Saibu wa minasan ga kōfu, dekiagatta fujin hyōjunfuku no kihongata," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 5 February 1942.

<sup>88</sup> "Erabareta fujin hyōjunfuku," *Fukusō Nippon*, December 1941.

“Japanese” look. The one-piece version of the *wafuku* design closely resembled a kimono, but it had a shorter, narrower obi and shorter sleeves to facilitate movement. The second version was two pieces, with wrap-around shirt and skirt and the same modified obi. In addition to the *wafuku* and *yōfuku* designs, the Ministry designed a third style that it called “active wear” (*katsudōi*). This uniform was intended for wartime emergencies, especially air raids. Significantly, this uniform included a protective hood and a choice of either monpe or pants.

In spite of lengthy debates about the design and input from readers, most women expressed little interest in wearing the “national uniform.” In response, the state used numerous tactics to try to familiarize women with the different designs and encourage them to wear them. Newspapers and magazines published instructions for how to make each of the designs, and leading “dressmakers” (i.e. fashion designers) offered free public lessons on how to make the uniforms.<sup>89</sup> The state also sponsored public events aimed at exposing women to the new designs, including exhibits at major department stores and a women’s march through Tokyo. One of the nation’s leading women’s organizations, the Greater Japan Women’s Organization (*Dai Nippon fujin kyōkai*), also did its part to encourage women to wear the “national uniform” by publicly announcing that it had adopted the uniform as its official office attire.<sup>90</sup> In spite of these efforts, the uniform failed to catch on.<sup>91</sup> In the frenzy of war, many women had neither the time nor the means to make the new uniforms. The state ultimately concluded that the project was wasteful and decided that the nation did not have the resources necessary to require women

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<sup>89</sup> "Fujin kokuminfuku shian," *Fukusō bunka*, December 1941, "Fujin hyōjunfuku no tsukurikata," *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 24 February 1942, "Tachikata, fujin wasōgata otsugō," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 25 February 1942, "Kōseisho seitei fujin hyōjunfuku no tsukurikata," *Fukusō bunka*, April 1942.

<sup>90</sup> "Nichifu no kaifuku kimaru," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 20 May 1942.

<sup>91</sup> In October 1942, the Ministry of Welfare held a meeting to discuss the reasons why women were not embracing the uniform. For details about the meeting, see "Fujin hyōjunfuku o kataru kai," *Fukusō bunka*, October 1942.

to wear the uniform, an ironic conclusion given the original reasons why the project was initiated.<sup>92</sup> By the end of the war, the state had discontinued the project and was instead encouraging women to wear monpe as the unofficial “national uniform.” In other words, the state had failed to design a suitable uniform and women continued to wear the clothes that made the most sense for them in their day-to-day lives.

The national uniform project emerged in the late 1930s as a response to Japan’s diminishing resources and as a means of promoting social unity around a common “Japanese” identity. While this was, in many ways, the ultimate expression of nationalism, Japan’s status as an imperial power was an important factor motivating the project. Even as Japan was expanding its territories and asserting itself as a major imperial player, the national uniform project functioned as a means of reaffirming a reified “Japanese” cultural identity. Although the naming of the uniform itself effectively excluded women from the “nation” and the category of “citizen,” the anxieties expressed by the experts and critics who designed the women’s uniform reveal the destabilizing effects posed by changes in traditional notions of femininity and illustrate the fundamental role that women played in constituting both Japanese “national” cultural identity and its imperial ideologies.

## Conclusion

By the start of the Pacific War, in December 1941, numerous restrictions were already in place that limited what women could wear.<sup>93</sup> In July 1940, a ban was issued prohibiting the purchase or use of “luxury” items. The list included more than 260 items, from food and cosmetics to fabrics and thread, and women were forced to hide any ornate kimono they owned.

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<sup>92</sup> Inoue Masahito, *Yōfuku to Nihonjin: Kokuminfuku to iu mōdo*, 54.

<sup>93</sup> Koizumi Kazuko, *Shōwa no kimono*, 102-06.

Women's groups actively monitored and enforced these restrictions at public demonstrations where they displayed placards and chanted "Luxury is the enemy! (*zeitaku wa teki da!*)" in the direction of anyone who was in violation of the new policies. As the war dragged on, a lack of resources began to strain the already scarce resources available on the home front. Following the China Incident, decreases in cotton and wool imports, primarily from Manchuria, led to restrictions on the kinds of fabrics women could use to make clothes. Cotton was banned completely and wool had to be mixed with "staple fibers" (*sufu*). Hemp production increased markedly as a cheap alternative to costlier fabrics. In February 1942, a ration coupon system was instituted that further limited women's ability to purchase and make new clothes.

Under these desperate conditions, and with Japan officially at war with the United States, attitudes toward *yōfuku* became increasingly negative. Critics and experts still acknowledged that *yōfuku* were superior to *wafuku* in terms of economics, health, and hygiene, but they vehemently rejected the notion that Japan was mimicking the West and emphasized the importance of designing a new style of the clothes that was based upon *wafuku* traditions. Satake Takemi, who was involved in the women's "standard uniform" project as a member of the lifestyle division of the Ministry of Welfare, was a proponent of *yōfuku* but argued that the term "*yōfuku*" was inaccurate because "the fabrics are domestically produced, we Japanese make them, and we Japanese wear them."<sup>94</sup> In his view, there was nothing "Western" about *yōfuku*. For Satake, *yōfuku* were good for physical activity, but in the interest of Japan's position as "the leader of the Orient," he argued that it was critical for Japan to think about the "originality of clothing" (*fukusō no dokujisei*). Instead of wearing *yōfuku* he advocated for the design of a new

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<sup>94</sup> Satake Takemi, "Ifuku bunka no shōri," *Fukusō Bunka*, July 1942, 10.

style of clothing that retained the basic shape of the kimono as a symbol of Japanese culture and tradition.<sup>95</sup>

The struggle to decide what women should wear in order to project an image of “Japanese” cultural identity culminated in the national uniform project. The fact that those charged with designing a uniform for women could not arrive at a suitable design is evidence that the very notion of “Japaneseness” was very much in flux. I maintain that the ultimate failure to design a suitable “standard uniform” for women was an effect of Japan’s status as a non-Western imperial power that was at once modernizing and attempting to establish cultural authority vis-à-vis its (potential) colonies in Asia.

The idea of a “national uniform” was of course not unique to Japan, but the challenges that Japan faced were particular to its unique status. In Italy, for example, the “black shirt” was not without controversy, but it was intended for men and, as Falasca-Zamponi suggests, the primary concern was not about projecting an image of “Italianness”: “The black shirt, Mussolini first and foremost wanted to communicate, was a uniform of combat....”<sup>96</sup> In Germany, the Bund deutscher Mädel (BdM), or the League of German Girls, a girls’ organization that was a constituent of the Hitler Youth, proposed a uniform design in 1938, but Hitler rejected it because it was not stylish and the group was forced to redesign the uniform. Hitler believed that the uniforms should make young women look “charming and attractive” and they should “produce a healthy impression.” In the end, “The uniform visibly expressed the Third Reich’s demand for

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<sup>95</sup> "Gendai josei no fukusō chōsa no hihan," *Fujin gahō*, October 1941.

<sup>96</sup> Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, "Peeking Under the Black Shirt: Italian fascism's disembodied bodies," in *Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, gender, and citizenship*, ed. Wendy Parkins (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2002), 148.

unity, uniformity, commonality, and community.”<sup>97</sup> To be sure, it was important that the BdM uniform project a particular image that was in line with German national interests, but concerns centered on choosing a design that was sufficiently stylish rather than on deciding between two distinctly different sartorial traditions.

The discourses on Japanese women’s clothes and the national uniform in particular, highlight the ways in which women’s bodies and their everyday practices became the grounds upon which the struggle to define what it meant to be “Japanese” was played out. But these debates also reveal some of the ways in which women were able to push back and shape ideas about “Japaneseness” and femininity. Women were not merely passive objects in these discourses; rather, by rejecting the state’s “standard uniform” suggestions and wearing *monpe* for the simple reason that it made sense and was readily available, Japanese women resisted state efforts to control their wardrobes. In the 1920s, when women began wearing *appappa*, their primary intention likely was not to revolt, rather they did so in order to keep cool in the hot summer months. Still, some critics objected to the *appappa* because it flew in the face of traditional clothing practices and threatened conventional notions of femininity. Simply by getting dressed in the morning, Japanese women were making choices that shaped discourse and ultimately helped to define what it meant to be “Japanese” in the age of empire.

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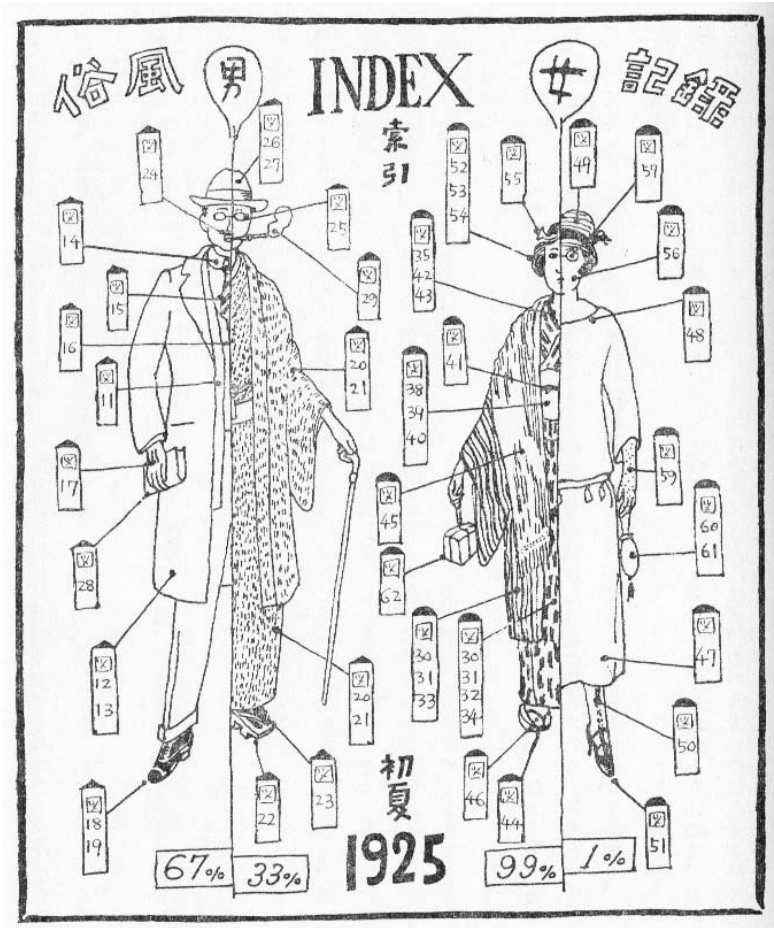
<sup>97</sup> Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic?: Fashioning women in the Third Reich* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2004), 120-21.

## Figures



**Figure 1.1** *Appappa*.  
From *Asahi graph*, 1932

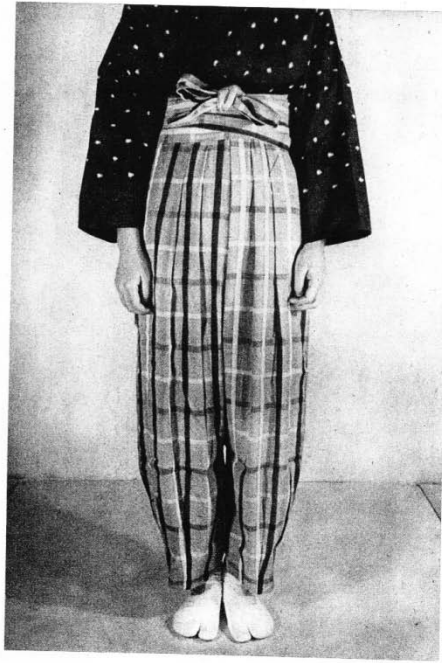




**Figure 1.2** Drawing illustrating Kon Wajiro's first modernology survey.  
From *Fujin kōron*, 1925

# めたく穿が人の會都

家庭で穿く樂なもんぺ



各地方のもんぺを集めて主としてその作り方、裁ち方に就て研究した結果、こゝに都會の人の着に二つの改良したもんぺを紹介する。地方に於てもその使用目的によつてそのもんぺの形が違ふのであつて、野良仕事の場合にはだぶだぶしたもんぺは穿かない。その穿き方も都會の人が穿くより板についてゐる。私はこゝに労働のはげしい場合のもの、家庭を中心にして坐つたり掃除したりする程度のもんぺと二つの異つた形製が出来たのが當然だと思ふ。

右の形製は家庭の座敷で使用する樂なもんぺで、着物の裾もそのまゝ下げてきられるものである。これは出来るだけ美しい縫を出す工夫をして前にたゝんが襷は前口まですつと縫く。後ろの中は一所に二重に縫ん

が襷で前に縫の縫を美しく包む

Figure 1.3 Monpe.  
From *Fujin gahō*, 1941



**Figure 1.4** Women's "standard uniform" design.  
From *Yōfuku to Nihonjin*, 2001

## **Chapter 2**

### **Fashioning Difference: Ethnic Costumes, Clothing Reform, and the Possibility of Resistance**

If discourses on the double life and the national uniform revealed anxieties about how Japan could modernize without losing its own distinct cultural identity, what local people were wearing in Japan's expanding empire played a critical role in shaping ideas about what it meant to be "Japanese" and establishing Japanese cultural authority vis-à-vis its Asian neighbors. This "civilizing mission" took on different forms in various colonial contexts. Representations of colonial women scantily clad in their ethnic dress helped to construct an image of them as "primitive" against which Japan could define itself as modern. As Cooper and Stoler have shown, this notion of difference between colonizer and colonized was central to the imperial project, but that difference had to be manufactured: "The otherness of the colonized person was neither inherent nor stable; his or her difference had to be defined and maintained."<sup>1</sup> In Japan, Alan Christy has described how Japan's imperial activities in Okinawa defined both Okinawan identity and Japanese cultural identity at home: "Japanese identity was constructed as the sign of a progressive, non-Okinawan identity, while Okinawan identity was produced as a sign of being antimodern and non-Japanese."<sup>2</sup> The visibility of ethnic costumes in the metropole – in magazines, ethnographies, and expositions, as well as on the streets – thus functioned as a visual and material marker of modernity, or lack thereof, that simultaneously constructed colonial "others" as nonmodern and Japanese as modern.

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*, ed. Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Alan S. Christy, "The Making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa," in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 147.

Japan's colonial regime also attempted to establish difference through the implementation of clothing reforms aimed at forcing native people to give up their traditional clothes. Such reforms functioned as a powerful technology of empire because of the intimate relationship between individual's and their clothes. For many colonial people, their clothes were at once a symbol of their culture, history, and tradition, as well as an expression of their personal tastes and individual sense of identity. By criticizing the native dress of colonial others and attempting to force them to change their everyday practices, Japan's colonial regime aimed to make colonial people "believe in the unworthiness of their traditional customs and embrace the new forms of civilized and rational social order."<sup>3</sup> In spite of the institution of clothing reforms, the materiality of clothing also offered opportunities for people to disrupt and resist colonial authority. Whether deliberate acts of resistance or merely a stubborn attachment to traditional customs and personal tastes, the refusal of colonial people to comply with new clothing policies constituted an affront to Japan's imperial ambitions. In this chapter, I analyze clothing both as a powerful technology of empire that produced discursive differences between colonizer and colonized, and as a material source of resistance that exposed the inherent vulnerabilities of Japan's imperial regime.

### **Ethnic Costumes**

Japan already had a long history of interest in foreign fashions by the time it established its modern empire. Ronald Toby has shown that foreign fashions played an important role in

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<sup>3</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and postcolonial histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 119.

producing a “Japanese” national identity as early as the Tokugawa period (1600-1868).<sup>4</sup> In his study of visits made to Edo (present-day Tokyo) by embassies from Korea and Ryūkyū (present-day Okinawa), the first of which was in 1607, Toby explains that the physical appearance of these foreign visitors marked a distinction between “self” and “other.” The processions made by these embassies, 12 by Koreans and 22 by Ryūkyūans, were major spectacles, and although the number of Japanese who observed these processions in person may have been limited, large numbers of the population were exposed to these events through artistic representations and reenactments of the processions at local festivals. Physical appearance was a particularly important way of marking identity and conveying a sense of difference between “Japanese” and the foreign visitors they portrayed at these festivals. When Japanese reenacted the Korean processions, for example, they “made garments in Korean fashion, shoes of Korean style, and Korean horsehair hats, and masqueraded as the Korean embassy.”<sup>5</sup> These reenactments brought Japanese into contact with the “foreign” in ways that were otherwise unthinkable given their inability to travel outside of Japan during this period of self-imposed isolation. In other words, these festivals brought the “other” home and helped constitute what it meant to be “Japanese.” As Toby explains:

“If the process of personal individuation begins with the recognition of what constitutes the ‘other,’ and then proceeds by elimination to the elaboration of the remainder into that which constitutes the ‘self’, we observe in these acts of definition and rehearsal of ‘Korea’, ‘Ryūkyū’, and other conceptions of the ‘alien’ in Japanese culture part of the

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<sup>4</sup> Ronald P. Toby, “Carnival of the Aliens: Korean Embassies in Edo-period Art and Popular Culture,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 41 (1986).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*: 446.

process of creating the national-cultural ‘self’: the early-modern Japanese national identity.”<sup>6</sup>

If the Japanese “self” was constructed through a process that required the “alien” or “other” to come to Japan during the Tokugawa period, in the modern period this dynamic was reversed as the imperial state encouraged Japanese travelers abroad to study colonial people and produce knowledge about the “other.” Henrietta Harrison has observed that soon after Japan established its colonial government in Taiwan, in 1895, for example, “One of the colonial government’s first acts was to send scholars and others to describe and classify the native population in ethnological terms.”<sup>7</sup> These accounts of indigenous life frequently included descriptions of ethnic costumes and invariably emphasized their primitivity. According to Harrison, “The Japanese rulers [in Taiwan] defined the indigenous people not as savages...but as a primitive people, who were temporally behind the Japanese and other modern nations.”<sup>8</sup> These representations contributed to the construction of a primitive and uncivilized colonial “other” who was awaiting the guidance of the more “civilized” Japanese.

Japanese representations of colonial others and ethnic costumes were not uniform throughout the empire. As Robert Tierney observes, “The Japanese defined themselves in various ways in relation to those they colonized: as conquerors bearing the gifts of civilization to backward others, as ethnographers studying these others to find the hidden order of their society, as nostalgic romanticists in flight from civilization, and as colonial officials promoting

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.: 423.

<sup>7</sup> Henrietta Harrison, “Clothing and Power on the Periphery of Empire: The Costumes of the Indigenous People of Taiwan,” *positions* 11, no. 2 (2003): 343.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.: 342.

assimilation politics.”<sup>9</sup> In this chapter, I analyze how Japan defined itself in relation to Korea, the South Seas, and China and Manchuria through representation of ethnic costumes, and I look at how Japan’s colonial regime attempted to institute clothing reforms and transform local peoples’ practices of dress in these different colonial contexts.

## Korea

The cultures and histories of Japan and Korea have for centuries been intertwined in complicated ways. Their always fragile and tenuous relationship was dealt a devastating blow when Japan annexed Korea in 1910. In spite of the increased tensions and animosity this produced between the two countries, Japanese continued to view traditional Korean clothes (*Chōsenfuku*) in a generally positive light.<sup>10</sup> For example, in 1926, the *Yomiuri Shinbun* published an article on Korean clothes that praised them for their “simplicity.”<sup>11</sup> A year later, the same newspaper published a photo of a Japanese family dressed in Korean clothes with a caption that noted how “cute” the three small children appeared.<sup>12</sup> Shiseido president Fukuhara Shinzō called Korean clothes the “most ideal clothes in the world” because of their sensible design.<sup>13</sup> And a report published in 1931 by the Japanese army in Korea claimed that Korean clothes shared many similarities with Japanese clothes, suggesting that the origins of Korean

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Thomas Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The culture of Japanese empire in comparative frame*, 1st ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Although I use the original Japanese terms *wafuku* (Japanese clothes) and *yōfuku* (Western-style clothes) in order to retain the nuances inherent in these terms, I have chosen to use the English translation when referring to Korean clothes in the interest of cultural sensitivity. The original Japanese term for Korea (*Chōsen*) now carries with it negative undertones and is typically used to refer only to North Korea in contemporary Japanese.

<sup>11</sup> “Chōsenfuku,” *Yomirui shinbun*, 15 July 1926.

<sup>12</sup> “Chōsenfuku no kawaii bōchan jōchan,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, 29 May 1927.

<sup>13</sup> Fukuhara Shinzō, *Shinpen fūkei* (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1930).



clothes could be found in *wafuku*.<sup>14</sup> This report went on to assert that Korean clothes were both more hygienic and less expensive than *wafuku*. By emphasizing the underlying similarities between *wafuku* and Korean clothes, these representations naturalized the cultural links between the two countries and therefore helped Japan justify its colonial activities in Korea.

But by the mid-1930s, Japanese attitudes toward Korean clothes had begun to change. The Manchurian Incident of 1931 had ushered Japan toward a new era of increased militarism and nationalism at home, and tensions between Koreans and Japanese authorities had also begun to boil over during this time, leading to more stringent colonial policies in Korea. These factors contributed to a sharp reversal in Japanese evaluations of Korean clothes, and Japanese officials began to criticize Koreans' preference for their traditional white clothing as an "evil practice."<sup>15</sup> One study by the Japanese colonial government in Korea found that the percentage of Koreans wearing white clothes in 13 different regions of the country ranged from 50% to 95%. In contrast, the next most popular color was black, which was worn by no more than 30% of the people in any region.<sup>16</sup> Experts attributed Koreans' preference for white clothing to a number of factors, including Buddhism, a lack of dyeing techniques, and a tradition of wearing white clothes in mourning and for funeral processions for the royal family. From Japan's perspective, white clothes were a symbol of Korean culture and tradition, and represented a potential obstacle to Japan's cultural authority in Korea and its attempts at cultural assimilation. Japanese authorities were now determined to institute clothing reform and persuade Koreans to wear more colorful fabrics in the interest of both practicality and, perhaps more importantly, destabilizing Koreans' sense of national cultural identity.

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<sup>14</sup> Chōsen-gun keiribu, "Chōsenfuku no kenkyū," *Hifuku* 2, no. 1 (1931).

<sup>15</sup> Funakoshi Junji, "Chōsen no hakui to katei senryō," *Hifuku* 7, no. 3 (1936): 69.

<sup>16</sup> Chōsen-gun keiribu, "Chōsenfuku no kenkyū," 146.

Japanese criticisms of Koreans' affection for the color white extended well beyond clothing. For example, in her excellent study of Japan's folk art (*mingei*) movement in the 1920s and 1930s, Kim Brandt has shown that Japanese intellectuals frequently criticized Korea's traditional pottery because it was white.<sup>17</sup> Brandt explains that Japanese *mingei* intellectuals viewed the color white as a symbol of Korean national identity and believed that it had come to represent Korean people's collective national sorrow. This became a point of ridicule, as *mingei* founder Yanagi Sōetsu (Muneyoshi) wrote, "Is not the paucity of color true proof of the absence of pleasure in life?"<sup>18</sup> Brandt argues that Yanagi's invention of *mingei* was a kind of "Oriental orientalism" and that "the Japanese appreciation of Korean art, and later of folk art in Japan and elsewhere in Asia, not only reflected Japanese colonial power but also helped to shape and augment it."<sup>19</sup> While *mingei* helped to legitimize Japanese authority in Korea, criticisms of Korean people's preference for the color white served as a backdrop against which Japan's more colorful aesthetic could be defined as sophisticated, modern, and civilized.

Evaluations of Korean ethnic dress functioned in a similar way. In 1936, Funakoshi Junji, a representative from the Japanese colonial government in Seoul, wrote that Koreans' preference for white clothing was an indication that they were "primitive."<sup>20</sup> Funakoshi reasoned that all civilizations had begun with white or naturally colored fabrics, but that they had eventually developed dyeing techniques and incorporated various colors into their wardrobes: "The fact that Korea is the only exception is evidence of their primitive lifestyle." Similarly, the Japanese army conducted a study of Korean clothes and concluded that although white clothes

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<sup>17</sup> Lisbeth K. Brandt, *Kingdom of Beauty: Mingei and the politics of folk art in Imperial Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Funakoshi Junji, "Chōsen no hakui to katei senryō," 69.

may convey the country's ancient culture and history, "compared with the clothes of civilized countries, there are countless items that must be researched and reformed."<sup>21</sup> Japanese discourses on Korean clothes thus helped to define Japan as modern by positing Koreans as primitive, uncivilized, and in need of guidance from their more civilized colonizers.

This kind of civilizational discourse was consistent with *mingei* intellectuals' criticisms of the color white in Korean aesthetics; however, one critical difference between aesthetics and clothing as technologies of empire was the fact that the *mingei* movement was primarily an intellectual movement while Japanese attempts to control what Koreans wore was something that Korean people experienced directly in the course of their everyday lives. In other words, although Japanese fashion experts helped to produce discursive differences between colonizer and colonized through representations of Korean dress as "primitive," the fact that the Japanese colonial government actively sought to transform Korean people's practices of dress meant that Korean people (and women in particular) experienced Japanese colonial power at the level of the body and in the rhythms of daily life.

In the mid-1930s, the Japanese colonial government began to initiate policies aimed at discouraging Koreans from wearing white clothes, which it viewed as impractical. Japanese officials maintained that white fabric soiled easily and was therefore unhygienic. In addition, white clothes required frequent washing, making them uneconomical because they wore out quickly and needed to be replaced frequently. More importantly, Japanese officials argued that this also created an undue burden for Korean women because it increased the amount of laundry they had to do. Japanese travelers in Korea frequently observed that Korean women always seemed to be on the riverbanks doing laundry. Japanese officials saw this as a waste of time and

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<sup>21</sup> Chōsen-gun keiribu, "Chōsenfuku no kenkyū," 153.

looked to reform Korean clothes in an effort to relieve women of the burden of laundry. The desire to reduce women's laundry responsibilities had little to do with Japanese concerns about any potential hardships in Korean women's lives; rather, Japanese officials were interested in persuading them to spend their time doing more productive things, such as working and going to school.

In response, Japanese officials used various tactics to try to persuade Korean women to use colorful fabrics. They distributed pamphlets and conducted public lectures in an effort to show Koreans that dyed clothes were cheaper and more durable than their traditional white clothes.<sup>22</sup> They also screened instructional films and held classes in villages in order to teach Korean women how to dye their existing clothes at home, emphasizing the point that doing so would reduce the amount of time and energy they spent doing laundry.

Attempts to persuade Koreans to wear colors and prints were not limited to Japanese state-level interests. In 1936, designer Tanaka Chiyo was sent to Korea by Kanebo, one of Japan's largest textile companies, to conduct a fashion show aimed at encouraging Korean women to buy colorful fabrics.<sup>23</sup> Although Kanebo was primarily interested in opening up a new market for its textiles, the company's objectives overlapped with the government's desire to reform Koreans' practices of dress. But these measures were met with only limited success and frustrated government and corporate officials alike. Officials criticized Koreans as "stubborn" because of their refusal to heed the advice of their more modern, civilized colonizers.

In 1935, Japanese poet Oguma Hideo captured the struggle over Koreans' white clothes in his epic poem, "Long, Long, Autumn Nights."<sup>24</sup> In this poem, Oguma powerfully described

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<sup>22</sup> Funakoshi Junji, "Chōsen no hakui to katei senryō," 71.

<sup>23</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, "Chosen dayori," *Fujin gahō*, July 1936.

<sup>24</sup> Special thanks to David Goodman for bringing this poem to my attention.

the brutal measures that the colonial government took to try to persuade Koreans to dye their clothes, as well as the resolve of Korean village women to hang on to their traditional clothes and resist colonial power and authority. Although Oguma was Japanese, he was sympathetic to the plight of the colonized and criticized Japan's militaristic regime throughout his career. David Goodman has written that Oguma possessed "a truly compassionate, multi-cultural worldview."<sup>25</sup> In "Long, Long Autumn Nights," Oguma identified with Korean villagers and vilified the Japanese for attempting to wipe out Korean culture.

Oguma's poem begins with the Korean village headman announcing the new policy on clothing issued by the Japanese:

No one wears white Korean dress.

In accordance with the regulations

Governing modern clothing,

Everyone wears black, got that?

Black clothes don't get dirty.

So there's no need to wash them.<sup>26</sup>

But, the older women of the village are determined to hang on to their traditions and express their refusal to comply with the new policies:

You say I have to stop wearing white Korean dress

Woe is me!

And put on colored clothes.

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<sup>25</sup> David G. Goodman, "Introduction: Oguma Hideo: A Man in Dark Times," in *Long, Long Autumn Nights: Selected poems of Oguma Hideo, 1901-1940* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1989), 12.

<sup>26</sup> Oguma Hideo, *Long, Long Autumn Nights: Selected poems of Oguma Hideo, 1901-1940*, trans. David G. Goodman (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1989).

Why don't you just shoot me?

Ah!

How can I abandon the white vestments

The gods bestowed?

Ah! Emperors! Ancestors!

The headman wants to take my white garments

And make me dress in black like a crow.

Lightning should strike him!

I won't do it!

He can kill me first!

I'd rather die,

Than be in anything but white!

For these women, their white clothes were not merely a familiar custom; they were a link with Korean heritage, tradition, and ancestry. Later that night, when young Korean men from the village found the old women wearing their white clothes they carried out their orders on behalf of the Japanese:

Damned bitches!

Wear white will you?

Then watch how easily it soils!

You worthless *toktack* shrews!

Take them off

Or have your clothes dyed as you wear them!

The term “*toktack*” refers to the rhythmic sound the women made when they banged wooden mallets against laundry blocks in the river. This sound is repeated throughout the poem as a backdrop to daily life in the village. But the men were determined to put a stop to the noise. While the old women struggled against their perpetrators, the young men finally overcame them:

They raise their brushes

Dripping black ink

And slash across their ancient adversaries’ white apparel.

Splattering Koreans’ white clothes with black ink was the most extreme measure the Japanese took to try to persuade them that their clothes were impractical. In the scene that Oguma described here, it is important to point out that the old women’s attackers were young Korean men acting on behalf of the Japanese. This suggests how deeply and completely Japanese imperial power had penetrated the lives of many Koreans. But at the conclusion of the poem the old women remind us that there were spaces for resistance under Japanese rule, as they wash the ink from their clothes in the river the next morning:

They plunge their besmirched raiments in the water,

And for a moment the stream turns black.

But the pollution flows downstream, the water clears,

And the old women’s enraged expressions soften, too,

As *tok-tack, tok-tack, tok-tack*,

They begin to beat the laundry.

Oguma’s poem captured the struggle between colonizer and colonized from the colonizers point of view, and he demonstrated how colonial violence was articulated not only through discourses about clothing, but also through physical and material attempts to alter Korean people’s practices

of dress. While Oguma's account was fictional, his portrayal demonstrated that Koreans' attachment to white clothing was about much more than fashion and aesthetics. White clothes were not only a symbol of Korean national identity; they were a fundamental part of Korean women's everyday lives and they were a link with an ancient past shared by all Koreans. This made them a target of Japanese authority in part because they were a symbol of what it meant to be Korean, but also because they functioned as a source of resistance against Japanese control.

Japanese attitudes toward Korean "ethnic costumes" thus functioned in multiple ways. On the one hand, discourses on Korean clothes during the 1930s helped to establish Japanese cultural authority in Korea by constructing Koreans as a "primitive" colonial other in need of guidance from its modern, civilized colonizer. On the other hand, clothing reform policies were a display of Japanese power and authority that Koreans experienced in their everyday lives and at the level of the body. The fact that the Japanese colonial government targeted Korean women in its attempts at clothing reform is a critical point that highlights the inseparability of gender and colonialism. Women often are the bearers of culture, tradition, and identity in many societies, so efforts by Japanese authorities to persuade Koreans not to wear white can be understood as an attempt to destabilize the very foundation of Korean culture and identity.

Furthermore, it is clear from Oguma's poem that the Japanese colonial government used clothing reform not only to change what Koreans wore, but also to disrupt Korean women's everyday practices and their social responsibilities. By altering women's traditional practices, Japanese colonial policies threatened to destabilize the gendered social order of Korean society and therefore enhance the colonial government's ability to exercise its authority and control. At the same time, Korean women's resolve and their recalcitrance in the face of Japanese attempts to control their wardrobe, their bodies, and the rhythms of their daily lives reveals the



incompleteness of Japan's colonial regime in Korea and highlights women's capacity to resist and undermine colonial power and authority. Examining "ethnic costumes" thus enables us to see how identities in both Japan and Korea were produced and reaffirmed, as well as how Koreans experienced colonial authority in visceral ways as a result of Japanese attempt to reform their practices of dress.

### South Seas

Following the start of war in China in 1937, Kon Wajirō argued that Japan needed to progress beyond the "feudal" kimono and establish a truly international fashion in order to rank among the world's great imperial powers.<sup>27</sup> Kon claimed that the kimono was "feudal," because it had remained unchanged since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and asserted that Japan should follow France's path from feudal fashion to a world leader in international fashion. In his view, France had achieved this as a result of the Industrial Revolution and because of its colonial activities in Africa, which had enabled it to draw upon and adopt influences from native dress or "ethnic costumes." Designer Moriwa Ken'ichi also believed that studying ethnic costumes from around the world could help improve the kimono and make it a "national costume" (*nashonaru kosuchumu*) that reflected Japan's imperial status.<sup>28</sup> While Moriwa saw opportunities for Japan to borrow ideas about design, fabrics, and craftsmanship from various ethnic groups across the empire, he also understood that researching and producing knowledge about ethnic costumes could be a powerful demonstration of Japan's imperial strength. The expansion of the empire into the South Seas (*Nanyō*), particularly after 1937, provided an excellent opportunity to do this

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<sup>27</sup> Kon Wajirō, "Jihen to ryūkō no shōrai," *Hifuku* 9, no. 1 (1938). Kon expressed similar views several months earlier, see also Kon Wajirō, "Sensō to onna no fukusō, donna henka ga okoru ka?," *Yomiuri shinbun*, 22 October 1937.

<sup>28</sup> Mori'wa Kenichi, "Nashonaru kosuchūmu no kenkyū," *Sōen* July 1938.

because it brought Japan into direct contact with people whose cultures, customs, and clothing were all markedly different from those found in Japan and the rest of East Asia.

Much as white clothing functioned as a symbol of difference between “uncivilized” Koreans and their more progressive and modern Japanese colonizers, nudity marked ethnic peoples in the South Seas as “primitive” for Japanese observers. For example, in 1931, an army official described women in Borneo as “primitive” because they used tree leaves as clothing and asked, “What would a modern cultured person think [if he saw that]?”<sup>29</sup> In 1938, painter Wada Sanzō explained that the people of the world could be divided into two groups, “the covered and the uncovered,” and used the English term “primitive” to describe the latter.<sup>30</sup> Not surprisingly, Wada included Japan in the “civilized” group. And a 1942 spread published in the magazine *Fukusō bunka* (Clothing culture) showed images of topless native women with the subtitle: “They are awaiting our guidance in clothing as well.”<sup>31</sup>

Descriptions of ethnic costumes in the South Seas frequently remarked on the visibility of indigenous people’s bodies. Nudity was for many critics a clear indication of the primitivity of the native populations in the region, and descriptions of native life often included observations about their physical bodies. In 1938, fashion designer Tanaka Chiyo traveled to Java and Bali, once again on behalf of the Kanebo textile company, and published feature articles in the October and November issues of *Fujin gahō* that provided ethnographic accounts of her travels.<sup>32</sup> Tanaka painted a picture of indigenous people’s lives as primitive and exotic. She described Balinese women’s “exotic beauty” (*yōbi*), observing that they were short and plump

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<sup>29</sup> Ogawa Yasurō, “Hifuku zairyō no ishu zattai,” *Hifuku* 2 (1931).

<sup>30</sup> Wada Sanzō, “Sekai fukusō ni kansuru isshoken,” *Hifuku* 9, no. 6 (1938).

<sup>31</sup> “Daitōa no fūzoku,” *Fukusō bunka*, June 1942.

<sup>32</sup> Taiwan-gun keiribu, “Taiwan minzoku no fukusō,” *Kokuminfuku* 6, no. 3 (1935), Tanaka Chiyo, “Jaba dayori: Jaba ni tsuite sūjitsu,” *Fujin gahō*, October 1938, Tanaka Chiyo, “Nankai no fukushoku o miru,” *Fujin gahō*, November 1938.

with “mature” (*seijuku*) bodies. Images published along with the articles showed women dressed only in sarong, their breasts exposed, carrying objects (hay, jars, ceremonial items) on their heads. In two of the published photographs, the women’s breasts were scratched out in an act of censorship, emphasizing for Japanese readers the indecency of leaving one’s breasts exposed.

While photographs of indigenous people (and especially women) scantily clad in their “ethnic costumes” would have projected a powerful image of indigenous people’s lives as primitive to Japanese readers and consumers, Henrietta Harrison has cautioned that these representations did not always reflect reality.<sup>33</sup> Harrison’s analysis of photos taken by Japanese ethnographers in colonial Taiwan reveals that Japanese authorities forced indigenous people to remove their shoes in order to appear more “primitive” for Japanese audiences. The staging of such photographs demonstrated the degree to which Japanese were fascinated by “primitive” cultures and indicated their ability to exercise authority over indigenous people. This enabled Japan to assert its position as the modern, civilized colonizer whose task it was to bring civilization to the native peoples who had come under Japanese control. The consumption of these images would have helped Japanese readers of *Fujin gahō* and other popular magazines come to see themselves as culturally superior and cosmopolitan by comparison.

At the same time that Japanese authorities and travelers to the South Seas participated in the project of asserting Japanese cultural authority vis-à-vis the native population, they were also keenly aware of an underlying need for cultural sensitivity. Japan, of course, was not the first colonizing power to arrive in the South Seas and had to compete with Western empires, past and present, for native people’s allegiance. By portraying itself as a more benevolent ruler than the

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<sup>33</sup> Harrison, "Clothing and Power on the Periphery of Empire: The Costumes of the Indigenous People of Taiwan," 346. For a discussion of Japanese views of ethnic clothing in colonial Taiwan, see Taiwan-gun keiribu, "Taiwan minzoku no fukusō."

Western imperial powers and emphasizing the racial ties it shared with native people as fellow “Asians,” Japan attempted to naturalize its relationship with colonial people and prove that it was better fit to lead them than white Europeans and Americans. Japanese officials and travelers in the South Seas reported that colonial people favored Japanese rule over European rule because the Japanese were more sensitive to their culture and traditions. Ethnic clothing played an important role in this process because it provided an opportunity for Japan to demonstrate its sensitivity toward native cultures.

For example, in a roundtable discussion among Japanese experts on the South Seas organized by the state, participants criticized the Dutch in Indonesia because they were concerned only about exploiting the resources in their colonies and cared nothing about the people who lived there.<sup>34</sup> They asserted that “white people” (*hakujin*) did not respect “our yellow race” (*waga ōshoku jinshu*) and concluded that “Asian societies” should be based on “Asian people’s lifestyle.” They were in favor of allowing indigenous people to continue to wear their traditional fabrics, prints, and styles rather than forcing them to wear *yōfuku*, as the Europeans had done. Another Japanese visitor to the South Seas criticized the “paternalistic policies” of the Spanish and German empires and believed that the islanders had come to see Japan as their “homeland” (*sokoku*).<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, Tanaka Chiyo reported that villagers in Java and Bali complained to her that their traditional lifestyle was being wiped out by unrelenting Europeans who were there only for profit and trade. Tanaka explained that under European rule the high-quality woven fabrics that were famous in Java and Bali had been replaced by machine-manufactured fabrics imported

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<sup>34</sup> “Ran’in no seikatsu wo kataru,” *Kokuminfuku* 2, no. 2 (1942).

<sup>35</sup> Ebihara Kōgi, “Wakai me de mita gaichi no seikatsu,” *Fujin gahō*, November 1939.

from industrial centers on Java and elsewhere in the region.<sup>36</sup> According to Tanaka, because the native people feared the Dutch and were poor and overworked, they had come to respect Japan as a “strong and reliable country” where the people were “friendly and favorable.” For Tanaka, Japan’s cultural sensitivity regarding ethnic clothes and the customs that surrounded them was a major factor in winning the loyalty and respect of native people in Java and Bali. These representations highlighted the ways in which race overlapped with culture in discourses on ethnic dress in the South Seas.

In spite of Japan’s initial attempts to appeal to native peoples by exhibiting cultural sensitivity in order to win their allegiance prior to formal colonization, as the war intensified attitudes changed markedly. To begin, Japan was growing increasingly short on resources at home and viewed the South Seas as a valuable source of textiles and other goods, much as Western empires had before them.<sup>37</sup> Japan’s government sent fashion and textile experts to the region to learn about the kinds of materials indigenous people used in their traditional clothes in hopes of identifying a solution to the shortages at home. For example, calico from the Dutch Indies was one popular fabric that Japanese designers saw as a feasible solution to the shortages and women at home were encouraged to experiment with it.<sup>38</sup>

By the time Japan formally colonized parts of Indonesia in 1942, experts had already begun to backpedal somewhat from their earlier position on cultural sensitivity and instead brainstormed ideas for how to export Japanese clothes to the region in the interest of cultural

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<sup>36</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, “Nankai no fukushoku o miru.”

<sup>37</sup> See “Hifuku shigen to shite no Nanyō,” *Kokuminfuku* 1, no. 1 (1941). Although concerns about resources emerged much earlier, this piece provides a detailed discussion of the increased shortage of resources in Japan brought on by the ABCD powers and focuses specifically on the South Seas as a source of resources for clothing. See also Horiguchi Akio, “Nanyō no hifuku shigen,” *Hifuku* 9, no. 1 (1938).

<sup>38</sup> For example, see Tanaka Chiyo, “Nanhō no ifuku,” *Ifuku kenkyū* 3, no. 5 (1943).

assimilation.<sup>39</sup> Japan recognized that encouraging or requiring colonial people to wear *wafuku*, or even a Japanese style of *yōfuku*, could help bring them under Japanese control and ease their assimilation into the empire. At the same time, there was considerable anxiety about how far these policies should go. Some experts expressed concern that “changing primitive people’s clothes” might be detrimental to Japanese authority because it could evoke negative feelings from the ethnic peoples toward their Japanese colonizers.<sup>40</sup> Others cautioned that Japan must maintain critical distance in order to rule effectively: “In the interest of governance, it is necessary to maintain difference between us (*kotchi no ningen*) and the native peoples.”<sup>41</sup>

Tanaka Toshio, who was an expert on Okinawan textiles and one of the founding members of the *mingei* (folk art) movement, proposed that Japan use Okinawa as a model for understanding how to implement clothing policies and export Japanese culture to the South Seas.<sup>42</sup> He reasoned that Okinawa was a good model because it was the southernmost point of Japan’s cultural sphere and shared a similar climate and terrain with other tropical regions in the empire. While Tanaka acknowledged the inherent links between Japanese and Okinawan cultures, and asserted that Okinawans were racially “almost the same” as Japanese, he viewed Okinawa as a successful example of Japanese cultural assimilation. In Tanaka’s view, Okinawan clothes closely resembled a medieval version of Japanese clothes, with their short sleeves and narrow obi, but Japan had successfully reformed Okinawan dress to meet Japan’s modern standards. The success of Japan’s cultural assimilation in Okinawa led Tanaka to conclude,

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<sup>39</sup> For more on Japan’s cultural assimilation (*dōka*) policies, see Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Oguma Eiji, *"Nihonjin" no kyōkai: Okinawa, Ainu, Taiwan, Chōsen, shokuminchi shihai kara fukki undō made* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Tanaka Kaoru, Tanaka Toshio, and Shimizu Tomi, "Tanaka Kaoru shi ni kiku nanhō ifuku," *Kokuminfuku* 2, no. 9 (1942).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.: 17.

<sup>42</sup> "Nanhō ifuku o dō suru ka," *Kokuminfuku* 2, no. 7 (1942): 19-20.

“Ryūkyū clothes *are* Japanese clothes,” and he believed that similar policies should be used to expand Japan’s cultural sphere farther south.<sup>43</sup> In this sense, Japan’s own clothing traditions were preserved in modern Okinawan dress.

Other experts argued that the key to assimilating indigenous people was to inspire them to “want to be like us.”<sup>44</sup> Kawakita Kashiko explained that it was the responsibility of Japanese women living in the colonies to wear *wafuku* so that indigenous people would learn to think of and admire Japanese people as beautiful and cultured. It is important to point out here that Kawakita specifically stated that it was the job of Japanese women to convey this message. In much the same way that indigenous women became bearers of ethnic identity by wearing their traditional dress, Kawakita saw it as Japanese women’s responsibility to wear kimono and embody a modern, sophisticated “Japanese” identity when they traveled to the empire. However, although Kawakita wanted colonial people to look up to Japanese, she was distinctly opposed to the idea of them wearing *wafuku* themselves. For Kawakita, the kimono was an expression of Japanese identity and should therefore be worn *only* by Japanese women.

Discourses on ethnic costumes in the South Seas reveal overlapping projects of othering and assimilation. Given the complex geopolitical circumstances surrounding the region, as well as Japan’s complicated status as a non-Western imperial power, Japan had to negotiate between asserting its cultural superiority and colonial authority on the one hand, and demonstrating

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<sup>43</sup> Japan officially changed the name of the Ryūkyū Kingdom to Okinawa after it became a prefecture in 1879. Elsewhere, Tanaka’s close friend and founder of Japan’s *mingei* movement, Yanagi Sōetsu, pointed out that Ryūkyū culture had been under Chinese influence for centuries and Okinawans therefore had to be assimilated into Japanese culture in the modern period. For Yanagai’s discussion of how this related to clothing, see Yanagi Sōetsu, “Ryūkyū kasuri,” *Fujin gahō*, April 1938.

<sup>44</sup> Kawakita Kashiko, “Nanhō e wa Nipponfuku de,” *Kokuminfuku* 2, no. 8 (1942). Kawakita would later become internationally famous as one of Japan’s leading film curators. See also Tanaka Kaoru’s views on the importance of Japanese dress in the colonies, Tanaka Kaoru, Tanaka Toshio, and Shimizu Tomi, “Tanaka Kaoru shi ni kiku nanhō ifuku,” 19.

cultural sensitivity in the interest of winning the loyalty of the people in the region and creating a Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere on the other.<sup>45</sup> In contrast to the scathing criticisms of Korea's white clothes as "primitive," Japanese tended to romanticize the ethnic costumes of the South Seas. Indeed, in some cases the South Seas were even represented as a space where Japan's own history was preserved and could be accessed through their native dress.

### China and Manchuria

In contrast to ethnic costumes in Korea and the South Seas, which were routinely ridiculed by Japanese as "primitive" and anti-modern, "China-clothes" (*Shinafuku*) were widely viewed as a modern, "Asian" alternative to *yōfuku*.<sup>46</sup> Amid Japan's ongoing struggle with the question of whether women should wear traditionally "Japanese" *wafuku* or the decidedly more "modern" *yōfuku* introduced from the West, many critics viewed China-clothes as a potential middle ground solution because they were at once practical and definitively "Asian" (i.e. non-Western). Many Japanese designers praised China-clothes and maintained that they were similar to *yōfuku* because, unlike kimono, they were generally two-piece and the bottom half resembled *yōfuku*-style pants.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, China-clothes were inexpensive and allowed freedom of movement, leading Gotō Asatarō, a China expert and travel writer, to herald China-clothes as all but perfect: "In fashion terms, China-clothes are simple and completely unproblematic in every way."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> See also Murakami Shisui, "Fukushoku to Dai Tōa kyōeien," *Fukusō bunka*, May 1942.

<sup>46</sup> I use "China-clothes" in place of the Japanese term *Shinafuku* because of the negative connotations implied by the use of the term "*Shina*" for China in contemporary Japanese. The term "China-clothes" refers to "Chinese clothes" as they were imagined by Japanese.

<sup>47</sup> Yamamoto Suzuko, "Beijing no oshare" *Fujin gahō*, November 1939.

<sup>48</sup> Gotō Asatarō, "Ifuku kara mita Man-Shi fūzoku," *Hifuku* 4, no. 1 (1933): 68-69. It is worth pointing out that Gotō was more than just one of Japan's foremost experts on China. In fact, he



In spite of the widespread recognition among Japanese fashion designers and experts that China-clothes were likely better suited to modern life than kimono, Japanese people were hesitant to adopt China-clothes in practice. Gotō charged that this was because Japanese people were blinded by their fascination with Western culture and quipped that the only reason why Japanese people might one day embrace China-clothes would be because they had become popular in the United States.<sup>49</sup> While this certainly was one important factor, Japan's complex relationship with China and its status as a non-Western imperial power also played a critical role in Japan's reluctance to wear Chinese styles.<sup>50</sup> Some critics explained that this reluctance was due to the fact that many Japanese people viewed China as a "third world country." Indeed, at a time when Japanese consumers were lured by all things modern, the association of China with the "third world" could have deterred Japanese from wearing China-clothes. One of the primary reasons why Japanese women/consumers longed for *yōfuku* was because they symbolized the modern, and Western culture represented the pinnacle of modernity.

But Japan's involvement in Manchuria, as well as its desire to unify Asia under Japanese rule, made it difficult for critics to dismiss China-clothes out of hand. In 1931, Japan helped to establish the puppet state of Manchuria, which effectively brought a region and a people that had been part of China under Japanese control. In spite of the growing tensions that this produced between China and Japan, discourses on clothing reveal that within the context of Manchuria, Japanese were able to praise Chinese cultural influences. This often involved deliberate attempts

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was a bit of a Sinophile and photographs of him dressed in Chinese clothes frequently appeared alongside his published articles. For more on the life and work of Gotō, see Joshua A. Fogel, *The Literature of Travel in the Japanese Rediscovery of China, 1862-1945* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 200-09.

<sup>49</sup> Gotō Asatarō, "Shina ni miru ifuku shinri," *Hifuku* 3, no. 4 (1932): 33.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of how Japan "Orientalized" China in the Meiji period, see Stefan Tanaka, *Japan's Orient: Rendering pasts into history* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

to dislodge the roots of “Chinese culture” in Manchuria from China. For example, the former Japanese minister to Jilin in Manchuria, Kimura Yoshika, attempted to dissociate China-clothes from China by arguing that they actually originated in Manchuria.<sup>51</sup> Kimura explained that while the Manshū people had been fully assimilated into the Han (Chinese) ethnic group in terms of language, lifestyle, and identity, the reverse was actually true of clothing. By arguing that (Han) China-clothes were actually “Manchurian,” Kimura attempted to disrupt the notion that China-clothes were in fact an expression or symbol of “Chineseness.” This kind of discursive maneuver opened up space for Japanese to praise China-clothes in Manchuria.

Japanese attitudes toward China-clothes in Manchuria were evident in a 13-page spread in *Fujin gahō* that introduced the domestic life of the Manchurian elite. The spread opened with a picture of the former Ministry of Industry’s two daughters dressed in China-clothes. The caption read: “When I saw these young, refined women’s China-clothes, it was the first time I truly understood the beauty of Chinese clothes. Their backs perfectly straight, their figures free....”<sup>52</sup> This description is especially interesting because it contrasted sharply with contemporary criticisms of *wafuku*. Japanese critics in the 1930s criticized the kimono because it warped young women’s bodies and damaged their posture. Instead, this observer praised the posture of these Manchurian women dressed in China-clothes, and argued that it was only when worn by Manchurian women that the true beauty of China-clothes became visible.

These positive evaluations of China-clothes in Manchuria led some experts to encourage Japanese designers to visit Manchuria to get “design hints.”<sup>53</sup> They reasoned that the merits of

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<sup>51</sup> Kimura Yoshika, “Manshū no fukusō,” *Hifuku* 5, no. 2 (1934). For more on the history of Manchurian clothes, see also Ishii Ōju, “Manshū minzoku no ifuku to fūzoku,” *Hifuku* 9, no. 8 (1938).

<sup>52</sup> “Manshūkoku daijin no katei hōmon,” *Fujin gahō*, November 1938.

<sup>53</sup> Nakamura Masatoshi, “Manshū no ryokō techō yori,” *Fujin gahō*, November 1938.

China-clothes were often overlooked because of the negative feelings Japanese people had toward Chinese people and they believed that designers would be better able to discern useful design elements in China-clothes if they traveled to Manchuria. The implication was that Japanese attitudes toward China-clothes varied depending on who was wearing them. If Japanese could see Manchurians wearing China-clothes, then the logic followed that they would be better able to see their beauty than if Chinese people were wearing the same thing. Japan's strained relations with China shaped Japanese attitudes toward Chinese people and their clothes, just as Manchuria's status as a Japanese puppet state rendered Manchurian people and their clothes a non-threat to Japanese cultural hegemony.

In spite of these distinctions, Japanese women remained reluctant to wear China-clothes.<sup>54</sup> In a roundtable discussion on the "question of Japanese and China-clothes," a group of Japanese women who had experience living or working in Manchuria explained that China-clothes were not suited to their bodies because they had poor posture.<sup>55</sup> They blamed this largely on the fact that they had spent a lifetime wearing *wafuku* and their bodies had become misshapen. In the end, while they recognized that China-clothes were cheaper and generally more practical for life in Manchuria, the participants concluded that Japanese women "looked ugly" (*minikui*) when they wore China-clothes and they hoped for a style of clothes that matched their "traditional body type" (*dentōteki na taikaku*). In other words, although these women appreciated the beauty of the China-clothes they saw when they were in Manchuria, they justified their resistance to wearing China-clothes by asserting that their bodies were

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<sup>54</sup> In my research, I have encountered very few sources, other than pieces by Gotō, that suggest that Japanese men wear China-clothes. Nearly all discussions of China-clothes concern women.

<sup>55</sup> "Manshū no seikatsu to Nippon no seikatsu no kōryū," *Fujin gahō*, January 1940.

fundamentally different from Manchurian women's bodies. This position reinforced an important distinction between Japan and its colonial others.

Rather than adopt China-clothes, the women expressed their desire for a suitable style of clothing that fits their (Japanese) body type. This was a reference to the ongoing project of clothing reform that was taking place in Japan at the time. Designers and experts were in the midst of brainstorming ideas for a new style of clothing that was modern and practical, and yet distinctly "Japanese." Although most agreed that *yōfuku* were generally superior to *wafuku*, they feared that Japan's cultural identity would be lost if Japanese people (and especially women) did not wear their traditional dress. In response, some suggested that Japan adopt China-clothes as an "Asian" alternative to *yōfuku*, while others recommended that Japan use China-clothes as the starting point for an "East Asian" uniform. Yoshioka Yayoi, who was a prominent feminist and chairwoman of the Greater Japanese Women's Clothing Association (*Dai Nippon fujinfuku kyōkai*), was one such advocate.<sup>56</sup> Yoshioka recommended that Japan put aside its biases against China in the interest of peace (and Japanese authority) in East Asia and use China-clothes as the basis for an East Asian uniform. But the idea of an East Asian uniform never got off the ground and was dismissed by most critics in favor of a "national uniform."

The discourses on China-clothes reflected the complicated relationship Japan shared with China, both politically and culturally. On the one hand, Japanese and Chinese cultures were inseparably intertwined in ways that characterized them both as "Asian," a fact that was significant for Japan as a non-Western empire. On the other hand, Japan and China were enemies, and after 1937 they were formally at war with each other. In this sense, China represented a very real threat to Japanese hegemony and cultural authority both in China and

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<sup>56</sup> Yoshioka Yayoi, "Kongo no Nihonjin no fukusō wa doko ni iku? Tōa no heiwa wo mezashite," *Sōen*, March 1938.

throughout Asia. Although China-clothes offered the potential of a modern, “Asian” alternative to *yōfuku*, Japanese officials remained cautious as they searched for a common underlying sense of “Asianness” that could unite the empire without compromising Japan’s cultural authority or its sense of identity. In this sense, the discourses on ethnic costumes enable us to see the tensions between Japan’s national and imperial interests and how they overlapped in important ways that had material consequences for Japanese imperial citizens at home and colonial subjects throughout the empire.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have analyzed how Japan’s imperial power was articulated differently in different colonial contexts through discourses and policies on clothing. In Korea, Japanese critics rendered Korean people’s preference for white clothes “primitive” in contrast to the more colorful fabrics used in “civilized” countries. Japan’s colonial government in Korea transformed these criticisms into policy as it attempted first to educate Koreans and play the role of benevolent ruler interested in helping relieve Korean women from the burdens of household work and civilize the population. Later, Japan took a more forceful approach and instituted policies that forbid the wearing of traditional white clothes. But Korean women protested against these efforts and found ways to hang on to their clothes in order to protect their culture and their history as well as the rhythm of their daily routine. Thus by continuing to wear their traditional dress, Korean women found ways to subvert Japanese authority and in the process they exposed the incompleteness of Japanese imperial power.

Japan’s relationship with the indigenous people of the South Seas was quite different and this was reflected in discourses on ethnic costumes there. Attitudes toward ethnic costumes

tended to romanticize the South Seas and Japanese critics sought to preserve traditional clothing practices there in an effort to distinguish Japanese imperial policies from those of their European colonizers and project an image of Japan as a benevolent ruler. As a result, critics tended to focus less on the inherent differences between Japanese and the “savages” of the South Seas and more on the inherent links the two peoples shared. As Tierney explains, “Far from being peripheral to Japan, this region came to be seen as central to its culture and as the birthplace of the Japanese people.”<sup>57</sup> Such views were necessary for Japan to implement its assimilation policies, and discourses on the clothing of the South Seas reveal the difficult balance of negotiating sameness and difference for the sake of empire.

In China and Manchuria, Japan did not dismiss China-clothes out of hand and some critics even saw them as a suitable alternative to *yōfuku* that expressed an “Asian” cultural identity. In spite of the threat that China posed to Japan’s cultural hegemony in Asia, China-clothes were seen as a potential basis for an “imperial uniform” that would symbolize a unified Asia under Japanese rule. But discourses on China-clothes were careful to draw a distinction between Japanese and Chinese on the basis of their distinct body types.

In all three examples I have chosen here, clothes were a means by which Japan articulated sameness and difference in relation to its colonial others. Through discourses on clothes, Japanese critics produced a distinction between colonizer and colonized that helped to establish Japan’s cultural authority vis-à-vis its Asian neighbors. Such representations were communicated to Japanese in the metropole through magazines, newspapers, ethnographies, and exhibitions and helped to produce Japanese identity as modern, civilized, and cosmopolitan. Japan’s colonial regime also used clothing reforms to try to exercise authority over colonial

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<sup>57</sup> Tierney, *Tropics of Savagery: The culture of Japanese empire in comparative frame*, 5.

people. The resistance to such acts of control by colonial women points to the power of clothing as a technology of empire but also to the “precarious vulnerabilities” of Japan’s imperial regime.<sup>58</sup>

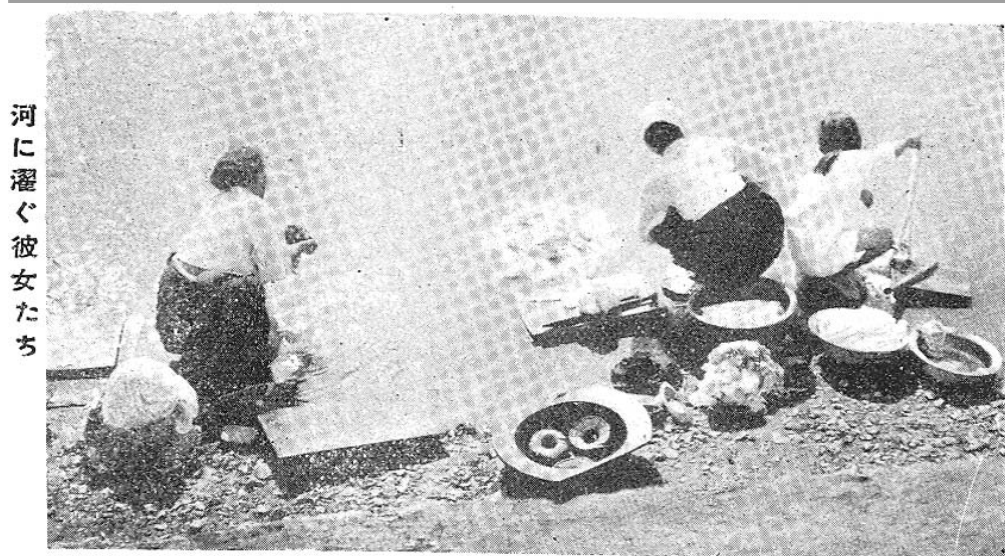
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<sup>58</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's history of sexuality and the colonial order of things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 97.

## Figures



**Figure 2.1** Women in traditional Korean dress.  
From *Fujin gahō*, 1936



河に濯ぐ彼女たち

**Figure 2.2** Korean women doing laundry in the river.  
From *Fujin gahō*, 1936





**Figure 2.3** Young Javanese woman.  
From *Fujin gahō*, 1938



**Figure 2.4** Javanese women at work in the fields.  
From *Fujin gahō*, 1938

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Imperial Makeover:**

#### **Miss Shiseido and the Making of the Modern Japanese Woman, 1934-1937**

Thus far, I have examined how women and their bodies became the ground up on which Japanese cultural identity was produced and maintained through discourses on fashion, but these debates played out in other arenas as well. In this chapter, I shift gears and look at how the struggle to define Japanese cultural identity unfolded in similar ways in the realm of cosmetics. I focus on Shiseido, Japan's leading maker of luxury cosmetics, and analyze how company president Fukuhara Shinzō deliberately crafted "Shiseido style," the term popularly used to describe Shiseido's corporate image, to be a sophisticated blend of Japanese and Western cultural influences.<sup>1</sup> The Shiseido brand appealed to consumers both in Japan and in the empire as a Japanese high-end, luxury brand that had the look and quality equivalent to some of the leading cosmetics makers in Paris and New York. Shiseido's marketing campaigns, both in Japan and in various markets throughout Asia, demonstrate how "Shiseido style" reflected Japan's status as a non-Western imperial power.

While the Shiseido example illustrates how ideas about Japanese cultural identity were articulated through the marketing of cosmetics, it also offers opportunities to see how women participated in the production of Japanese notions of femininity and national/imperial culture. Shiseido was one of a number of companies to introduce Western beauty products and techniques to Japanese consumers during the prewar period. In contrast to the traditional practice of whitening one's face and blackening one's teeth, Japanese women learned to use products that matched their skin tone for a more natural, modern look. This represented a

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<sup>1</sup> One critic described "Shiseido style" as a "new culture" that was a "hybrid of East and West." See Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, ed., *Bi to chi no mīmu, Shiseidō*, 3 ed. (Tokyo: Kyūryūdō, 1998), 30.

significant shift in ideals of feminine beauty and in the ways in which women assembled their appearance. From 1934-1937, Shiseido ran an innovative marketing campaign that sent a handful of “Miss Shiseido,” 28 women in all, around the country and into parts of the empire to show women how to use Western-style cosmetics. Through beauty demonstrations and individual consultations, Miss Shiseido gave advice to consumers about how to choose the right cosmetics for their individual skin tones and complexions, and introduced proper beauty techniques. At the same time, Miss Shiseido was also a model of modern ideals of feminine beauty and a figure that women looked up to and admired in much the same way they did the leading movie stars of the day. As the embodiment of “Shiseido style,” Miss Shiseido did not conform to the traditional norm of the “good wife and wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*); rather, she was a highly visible example of a woman who was modern, cosmopolitan, stylish, confident, and career-minded. Although she was not “militant” in the way that the Modern Girl had been a decade earlier, I argue that Miss Shiseido was an important figure because she challenged traditional feminine norms without threatening to destabilize the gendered social order that undergirded Japanese imperial society.<sup>2</sup> In this way, my analysis of Shiseido demonstrates how Japanese cultural identity was produced through discourses and marketing campaigns but also by women as subjects in the form of Miss Shiseido and consumers of cosmetic products.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “militant” comes from the title of Miriam Silverberg’s seminal piece on the Modern Girl, see Tani E. Barlow et al., *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, modernity, and globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), Miriam Rom Silverberg, “The Modern Girl as Militant,” in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For more on gender and imperial regimes, see Antoinette Burton, ed., *Gender, Sexuality, and Colonial Modernities* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999).

## Crafting “Shiseido Style”

In 1927, Shiseido published *Ladies’ Handbook* (*Fujin techō*), a 187-page primer for the modern Japanese woman.<sup>3</sup> Included in this volume were short essays designed to familiarize the modern woman with a wide range of topics. Entries on furniture, modern appliances, and nutrition provided women with the latest tips for keeping the domestic realm in order. Notes on handbags and hairdos, fashions from Paris and around the world, and the process of making perfume brought readers up to date on modern style and beauty techniques. Instructions for how to mountain climb and the basic rules of golf and tennis emphasized the importance of staying healthy and active. Explanations of Greek sculpture, Japanese *ukiyo-e* (woodblock print), Russian ballet, Chinese theater, and photography encouraged women to have an appreciation for culture and the arts in both the East and the West. And entries on automobiles, trains, battleships, and airplanes helped familiarize readers with the latest in modern technology.

This eclectic collection provides a sense of the kind of cultural knowledge that Shiseido believed every modern woman should have.<sup>4</sup> Significantly, this ideal did not strictly conform to the traditional norm of the “good wife and wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*). Rather, *Ladies’ Handbook* painted a picture of the modern woman as being both in charge of the domestic sphere and cosmopolitan – well educated, fashionable and feminine, and familiar with cultures and traditions from around the world. It was a model that stretched the boundaries of traditional femininity, yet stopped short of radically reconfiguring them.

Shiseido’s vision of femininity and feminine beauty reflected its cosmopolitan corporate image, which Fukuhara constructed through a deliberate attempt to bring together Japanese

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<sup>3</sup> Shiseidō Design Department, ed., *Gofujin techō* (Tokyo: Shiseidō, 1927).

<sup>4</sup> Wada Hirofumi, *Shiseido*, vol. 17, Korekushon, modan toshi bunka (Tokyo: Yumani Shobō, 2006), 842.

cultural traditions and modern Western influences. This image was neatly captured in the opening pages of *Ladies' Handbook* in an *ukiyo-e* print entitled, "Ginza Scene" (*Ginza fūkei*).<sup>5</sup> [See Appendix, Figure 3.1] The print depicts a modern urban street scene in front of Shiseido's flagship store in Tokyo's Ginza district, the center of modern culture and fashion in all of Japan. In the frame, the Shiseido building looms to the right, and several large automobiles crowd the street in front, as if eager to catch a glimpse of the latest styles on display inside the store. The focal point is to the left, where two fashionably dressed women stand in the foreground. The woman on the left is dressed in a gold kimono with a blue obi tied high above her waist, and she is wearing a long green scarf and black elbow-length gloves. Her hair is in the popular *mimikakushi* style and her cheeks are blushed to suggest that she is wearing makeup. Her hair, makeup and accessories, as well as the stylish way she is wearing her kimono, all suggest that she is a Modern Girl (*moga*), the figure who famously challenged modern ideals of femininity through her transgressive behavior and unconventional fashion choices in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>6</sup> Notably, as if to reaffirm her Japanese identity, she holds a red and white parasol that resembles the Japanese flag. Standing alongside her is another Modern Girl. This one is dressed in a gray pleated skirt and matching blouse. Her flapper-style hat is pulled down over her ears and her cheeks are also rouged. Her head is turned away from her companion and she is gazing over her shoulder in the direction of Shiseido. Looking back at them is a Modern Boy (*mobo*), dressed sharply in white pants, a blue suit jacket, and red tie. He stands debonairly leaning on a cane and

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<sup>5</sup> Published in: Shiseidō Design Department, ed., *Gofujin techō*.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the Modern Girl, see Barbara Hamill Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2003). Shiseido publications at the time also examined the Modern Girl issue. See, for example, "Modan Gāru (*Zadankai*)," *Shiseido geppō*, June 1926.

behind him are a handful of kimono-clad women and men in Western-style suits peering into Shiseido's window display.

“Ginza Scene” neatly captures the blend of Japanese and Western, traditional and modern influences that defined Shiseido's corporate image. This is evident in the use of the familiar colors and style of traditional Japanese *ukiyo-e* to depict automobiles and the modern architecture of Shiseido's headquarters building. Similarly, the two Modern Girls, one in *wafuku* and the other in *yōfuku*, illustrate that being “modern” in Japan did not necessarily mean being “Western.” This print appeared in the opening pages of *Ladies' Handbook* and together they provided a picture of how Shiseido envisioned the ideal modern Japanese woman.

### **Modern Medicine and Ice Cream Sodas**

Shiseido's history was from the start intertwined with the development of modern culture in Japan. Founded in Ginza in 1872 by Fukuhara Arinobu, the former head of pharmaceuticals at a Japanese naval hospital, Shiseido was the first pharmacy in Japan to specialize in Western-style medicine.<sup>7</sup> Earlier that year, Ginza had burned to the ground in a devastating fire, and the Tokyo city government mandated that the district be rebuilt entirely in brick. This decision was meant to prevent future disasters, but it was also intended to be an experiment in Western architecture. Following reconstruction, Ginza quickly developed into the center of modern culture in all of Japan. It was the place to go to experience food, fashion, music, technology and other cultural influences introduced from the West. Ginza's association with the modern during the Meiji period was most evident during the “Rokumeikan Era,” which was named after the hall that became famous for hosting balls and other events for Western dignitaries. Guests at the

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<sup>7</sup> Nagai Tamotsu and Takai Shōichirō, eds., *Fukuhara Arinobu den* (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1966).

Rokumeikan were from the elite class and they came dressed in *yōfuku*, danced to waltzes, and dined on Western-style foods. By opening the doors of his pharmacy in Ginza, Fukuhara found himself operating in the heart of Japanese modernity. Shiseido's location in Ginza would play an important role in defining the company's image, and it would frequently draw upon this association in its advertising as a way of conveying a modern, high-class image to consumers.<sup>8</sup>

As a pharmacy specializing in Western-style medicine Shiseido was very much a part of the dramatic cultural and paradigmatic shift that was taking place in Japan at the start of the Meiji period. During this time, most “pharmacies” in Japan specialized in Chinese medicine (*kanpō*), and few Japanese were familiar with medical practices in the West. As a result, many of the products that Fukuhara introduced transformed practices of health and beauty in Japan. For example, Shiseido helped revolutionize dental hygiene in Japan when it introduced “Fukuhara Sanitary Tooth Paste” in 1888.<sup>9</sup> While the price of this product was too high for most people to afford, it marked a sharp departure from the salt and processed limestone that Japanese people traditionally used to brush their teeth. Shiseido was also among the first companies to introduce Western-style cosmetics to Japan. In 1892, it introduced Eudermine, a beauty lotion that remains Shiseido's signature product more than 100 years after its debut, and in 1906 it became one of the first companies to produce a flesh-toned foundation. While Eudermine gained a loyal following among women of the elite class, the practice of using Western-style foundation

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<sup>8</sup> Shiseido frequently used its association with Ginza to its advantage in its marketing, and it took every opportunity to highlight the fact that its own history was intertwined with that of Ginza. In 1921, Shiseido published what came to be known as the “Ginza Bible.” This was the definitive guidebook to all of the hot spots in Ginza and it included essays from notable figures like Gotō Shinpei and Yosano Akiko. Misu Yutaka, ed., *Ginza* (Tokyo: Shiseidō Cosmetics Division, 1921). In 1933, Shiseido published a special issue of *Shiseido Graph* that documented Ginza's post-earthquake recovery and its rise as the center of modern fashion in Tokyo: “Ginza fukkō,” *Shiseidō graph*, no. 4 (1933). See also Shiseidō, “Ginza o aruku,” *Shiseidō geppō*, January 1927, Shiseidō, *Shiseidō shashi: Shiseidō to Ginza ayumi 85-nen* (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1957).

<sup>9</sup> Shiseidō, *Shiseidō hyakunen-shi* (Tokyo: Shiseidō, 1972), 41-45.

would not catch on until the Taishō period. Nevertheless, products such as these helped to establish Shiseido's reputation as an innovator in the business of both pharmaceuticals and cosmetics.

In 1902, Fukuhara made Shiseido a Ginza destination when he installed a soda fountain in his pharmacy, following a tour of drug stores in the United States and Europe. Convinced that this would thrill Japanese consumers and provide a much-needed boost in sales, Fukuhara managed to import a soda fountain from the U.S., complete with syrups, cups, spoons, and even straws.<sup>10</sup> The fountain was the first of its kind in Japan and proved to be a huge success. Visitors to Ginza were attracted to the novelty and the opportunity to indulge in a Western cultural experience. Shiseido later expanded its menu to include other Western foods, such as croquettes and curry rice.

### **Branding Shiseido**

By the end of the Meiji period, Fukuhara had built Shiseido into a moderately successful maker of pharmaceuticals, best known for its toothpaste, hair tonic, and ice cream sodas. But in 1915, Fukuhara transferred control of Shiseido to his son, Shinzō, and made him company president. This later proved to be a pivotal moment for Shiseido, as the younger Fukuhara was committed to transforming the company into a leading maker of luxury cosmetics.

Fukuhara Shinzō accepted his role as company president reluctantly. A talented artist, he had dreamed of becoming a painter but was forced into the family business because one of his elder brothers had died and another was chronically ill and unable to execute the duties of company president. In preparation for his new role, Fukuhara went to New York to study

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<sup>10</sup> Shiseidō Public Relations Department, *The Shiseidō Story: A history of Shiseidō, 1872-1972* (Kakegawa: Shiseidō, 2003), 8.



pharmaceuticals at Columbia University.<sup>11</sup> After finishing his studies, Fukuhara worked at a New York pharmaceuticals company where he endeared himself to the owners and convinced them to share with him their formulas for hair tonic and other cosmetic items, tips that would be useful to him in his new position.<sup>12</sup> Prior to returning to Japan, Fukuhara traveled to Europe for several months to take in the art scene. In Paris, Fukuhara found a community of Japanese artists and spent time painting and studying art. The relationships he established there later played a major role in shaping Shiseido's corporate image. It was also during this time that Fukuhara fell in love with photography. He purchased his first camera in London and experimented with it while in Paris. Fukuhara went on to become a pioneer of modern photography in Japan, writing numerous books and articles on the subject and gaining recognition for his own work.<sup>13</sup>

Fukuhara's passion for art and his experiences in Europe and New York were important factors that influenced the decisions he made in crafting Shiseido's corporate image. By the time he returned to Japan, after nearly six years abroad, he had already decided that he was going to lead Shiseido in a new direction. Rather than continue with the family business of pharmaceuticals, he was determined to reinvent Shiseido in the image of the finest makers of luxury cosmetics he had encountered in Paris and New York. Fukuhara saw cosmetics both as a way for Shiseido to increase sales and as an opportunity to indulge his own passions for Paris and art.

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<sup>11</sup> Yabe Nobutoshi, *Fukuhara Shinzō* (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1970), Shimamori Michiko, *Ginza monogatari: Fukuhara Yoshiharu to Shiseidō bunka* (Tokyo: Mainichi shinbun-sha, 1996), 61-87.

<sup>12</sup> Shiseidō Public Relations Department, *The Shiseidō Story: A history of Shiseidō, 1872-1972*.

<sup>13</sup> Some examples include Shinzō Fukuhara, *Fukuhara Shinzō ronsetsu: Shashin geijutsu* (Tokyo: Musashi Shobō, 1943), Fukuhara Shinzō, *Shinpen fūkei* (Tokyo: Shiseido, 1930), Fukuhara Shinzō, *Tabi no shashin satsuei annai*, vol. 19, Asahi kamera sōsho (1937), Fukuhara Shinzō, *Fukuhara Shinzō zuihitsu: Shashin o kataru* (Tokyo: Musashi shobō, 1943). For a complete list of Fukuhara's publications on photography, see *Fukuhara Shinzō to bijutsu to Shiseido*, (Tokyo: Setagaya Bijutsukan, 2007).

The first step in making the transition from pharmaceuticals to high-end cosmetics was to revamp Shiseido's corporate image. Fukuhara began by redesigning the company logo. Fukuhara's father had designed the original logo, an eagle crest, for his "Sanitary Toothpaste" and this became Shiseido's trademark throughout the Meiji period. Although this original design may have conveyed strength and trust to consumers of Shiseido's soaps, toothpastes, and pharmaceuticals, the younger Fukuhara felt that this did not project the image of luxury and sophistication that he wanted consumers to associate with Shiseido cosmetics. Fukuhara used his artistic talents to draft a new design that he believed better fit his vision for the company. Drawing inspiration from the camellia, he drafted a logo design using watercolors. The camellia was a fitting choice because it was indigenous to Japan, having once been cultivated for Japanese elites, and it was highly sought after by Europeans as an "exotic" symbol of the Orient.<sup>14</sup> Camellia Hair Oil also happened to be one of Shiseido's most popular products at the time and would have been recognizable for Japanese customers. Fukuhara handed his original design on to a team of artists who refined it and produced Shiseido's now-famous "camellia mark." The logo is a simple camellia drawn in the art nouveau style and it loosely resembles a Japanese family crest. Shiseido has used this basic design for nearly a century, with only minor updates and revisions. It is a perfect expression of Fukuhara's vision for Shiseido – modern elegance rooted in Japanese taste and tradition.

The artists responsible for refining the camellia logo were members of Shiseido's "Advertising Creation Department" (*ishōbu*), which Fukuhara established in 1916 to help craft the Shiseido look. It was unusual for Japanese companies at this time to have a department devoted to advertising, but Fukuhara assembled the team to create a consistent corporate look

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<sup>14</sup> Shiseidō Public Relations Department, *The Shiseidō Story: A history of Shiseidō, 1872-1972*.

befitting a luxury cosmetics maker. The design team was responsible for designing posters, store displays, advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and packaging. Many of the artists who worked in the advertising department were Japanese artists that Fukuhara had met in Paris, including Yabe Sue and painter Kawashima Ri'ichiro. Kawashima was a close confidant of Fukuhara and spent a good deal of time in Paris. As a result, he was able to keep Fukuhara up to date on the latest fashions and trends in Europe. In fact, in 1927, Kawashima wrote a regular column, entitled the "Paris Report," for the *Shiseido Geppō*, the company's monthly magazine, in which he shared with readers the current fashions in Paris.<sup>15</sup>

The staff of the advertising department was responsible for producing a corporate image that was modern, elegant, and sophisticated in a style similar to the finest brands in Europe. They drew from their collective experiences in Europe and their appreciation for Western art to produce designs in the art nouveau and art deco styles. In contrast to earlier Shiseido advertisements, which were largely text-based, frequently in black and white, and which tended to focus on the product, the advertising team designed ads that were elegant, colorful, and typically included drawings of women that often had little to do with the products being promoted in the ads. This difference was significant because it suggested that Shiseido was marketing its modern image as much as it was specific products. The camellia logo was ubiquitous in all of these ads as an easily recognizable marker of the Shiseido brand.

Fukuhara's team of designers generated labels and packaging that gave products a distinctly "Japanese" feel. This was particularly evident in the packaging for Shiseido

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<sup>15</sup> For example, see Kawashima Ri'ichirō, "Natsu no Parisian," *Shiseidō geppō* September 1927, Kawashima Ri'ichirō, "Pari tsūshin," *Shiseidō geppō*, March 1927. Paris style and fashion was a recurring theme in Shiseido's publications. See also Ishiguro Kei'ichi, "Pari bijin-dan," *Hanatsubaki*, no. 42 (1937).

perfumes.<sup>16</sup> At the time, most perfumes in Japan were imported from Europe, primarily from Paris, and Shiseido was one of the first Japanese companies to produce perfumes domestically.<sup>17</sup> Fukuhara selected fragrances inspired by Japanese flowers, such as plum blossom, chrysanthemum, and wisteria, in order to distinguish Shiseido's products from the European imports that Japanese consumers were accustomed to. Bottles and decorative boxes featured small, simple drawings of flowers done in art nouveau and art deco styles, and the corresponding name of the flower was written in English or Romanized Japanese (e.g. "Kiku" (Chrysanthemum), "Wisteria," and "Woo-me" (a clever Romanization of the Japanese term for plum (*ume*)). By not using Japanese characters, the packaging conveyed a sense of the foreign, which further enhanced Shiseido's association with Western style and quality.

Fukuhara worked quickly to introduce new products that would help establish Shiseido's reputation as a maker of fine cosmetics. In 1917, Shiseido's "Rainbow Face Powder" helped revolutionize ideals of feminine beauty and the ways in which Japanese women assembled their appearance.<sup>18</sup> Consisting of seven powders in different hues, this product enabled women to approximate their skin tone. The design team came up with unique packaging for the face powder. Each of the seven colors was in its own original eight-sided, white satin box, and the lids were embossed with two concentric gold lines and Shiseido's camellia logo. Above the logo were the words "poudre de riz," the French term for face powder, and below it in Roman letters, "Shiseido, Tokyo." The package design was simple yet sophisticated and conveyed a sense of

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<sup>16</sup> Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, ed., *Bi to chi no mīmu, Shiseidō*.

<sup>17</sup> For more on Shiseido perfumes, see Morishita Kaoru, "Nihon ni okeru fureguransu no ryūkō 100-nen," in *Nihon no keshō bunka*, ed. Kazuko Ōya (Tokyo: Shiseidō, 2007).

<sup>18</sup> Setagaya Bijutsukan, *Fukuhara Shinzō to bijutsu to Shiseidō* (Tokyo: Setagaya Bijutsukan, 2007).

the foreign, which was exactly what Fukuhara wanted consumers to associate with the Shiseido brand.

This was Shiseido's second attempt to introduce Western face powders to Japanese consumers. While most women could not afford or had little interest in Western face powders in 1906, by 1917 consumption was on the rise and greater numbers of women were eager to embrace this new trend in beauty culture. The flood of modern Western culture, Hollywood films, and a general enthusiasm for "Americanism" also increased demand for modern fashion and cosmetics. Shiseido was one of a number of companies to introduce similar face powders around this time, and the "Rainbow Face Powder" succeeded in making Shiseido a visible player in the cosmetics market.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most significant move that Fukuhara made in crafting Shiseido's corporate image came in 1929, when he invited Yamana Ayao to join the company's advertising department. Yamana was an important figure in Japan's art scene and worked for Shiseido off and on for nearly fifty years, from 1929-1932, 1936-1943, and 1948 until his death in 1980.<sup>20</sup> In the prewar period, Yamana left Shiseido due to artistic differences with Fukuhara and became art director for the groundbreaking art and travel journal, *NIPPON*.<sup>21</sup> But from the time he first arrived at Shiseido, Yamana's elegant line drawings of women left an important mark on Shiseido's image and came to define the company's look for decades to come.

Yamana's work transcended space, race, and time. In most of his work for Shiseido, particularly in the prewar period, Yamana depicted women who were of no discernible race. The

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<sup>19</sup> Tsuda Kiyo and Murata Takako, eds., *Modan keshō-shi*, 5th ed. (Tokyo: POLA Cultural Research Center, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Nakamura Makoto, ed., *Yamana Ayao sakuhinshū: Platon-sha kara Shiseidō made josei o egaite 50-nen* (Tokyo: Seibundō Shinkōsha, 1981).

<sup>21</sup> Gennifer Weisenfeld, "Touring Japan-as-Museum: *NIPPON* and other Japanese imperialist travelogues," *positions* 8, no. 3 (2000).

fact that his subjects were not “Japanese” or “Asian” in their appearance was significant in terms of Fukuhara’s goal of making an impact on the global cosmetics market. For consumers in Japan and throughout Asia, Yamana’s work projected a sense of the foreign and enhanced Shiseido’s cosmopolitan appeal. At the same time, the fact that the female subjects in Yamana’s designs were not overtly “Asian” was an advantage for Shiseido as it attempted to move into the European and American markets. Fukuhara ultimately wanted Shiseido to make an impact on the global cosmetics industry. In 1935, Shiseido products made their debut in the American market when they went on sale at a Mark Cross retail store on Fifth Avenue in New York. Later that year, Shiseido began exporting products to high-end department stores in New York, London, and Paris.<sup>22</sup> While the war ultimately limited Shiseido’s expansion in the West, Yamana’s designs nevertheless helped to define a corporate image for Shiseido that had currency in the global cosmetics market.

### **Shiseido as Cultural Producer**

In addition to crafting a new corporate look for Shiseido, Fukuhara committed significant time, energy, and resources to diversifying Shiseido’s cultural profile. He did so by building upon the work begun by his father, who had made Shiseido into a Ginza destination best known for its ice cream sodas. He began by redesigning his father’s original Ginza drugstore. In 1919, Shiseido opened the doors of a new complex that included a remodeled and expanded shop floor, complete with an adjoining ice cream parlor (along with the original soda fountain), and next door a four-story factory and Cosmetics Division.<sup>23</sup> The shop itself was redesigned specifically

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<sup>22</sup> Shiseidō, *Shiseidō hyakunen-shi*, 213-14.

<sup>23</sup> Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, *Tsukutte kita mono, tsutaete yuku mono: Shiseidō 120-nen shi* (Tokyo: Shiseidō, 1993).

for the sale of cosmetics, and with its colorful stained glass windows it exuded luxury and elegance. Consumers could purchase well-established Shiseido products like Eudermine, hair tonic, and toothpaste, but they could also shop for the latest in high-end cosmetics. Along with Shiseido's growing stock of cosmetics, the shop carried accessories such as mirrors and brushes that were inspired by the West.

In the neighboring Cosmetics Division, Fukuhara used extra space on the third floor to create an art gallery where aspiring young Japanese avant-garde artists could display their work for free. This space offered a rare opportunity for Japanese artists, who often struggled to find places to display their work publicly. Fukuhara saw the gallery as an opportunity to indulge his own passion for art and support young Japanese artists, as well as a chance to further enhance Shiseido's association with high culture. He oversaw the selection and display of the works in each exhibit, choosing to show Kawashima's work in the gallery's first exhibit. Under Fukuhara's guidance, this art space eventually became the Shiseido Gallery, the oldest non-profit art gallery still in operation in Japan today. Over the years, the Shiseido Gallery has opened more than 3,000 exhibitions, displayed the work of more than 5,000 artists, and been a constant presence in the heart of Ginza for nearly a century.<sup>24</sup>

This new Shiseido complex in Ginza was a symbol of the company's growth, and the luxury and elegance it exuded contributed to Fukuhara's ongoing project of producing and promoting "Shiseido style." But just as Fukuhara was gaining momentum in revamping the Shiseido brand, the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 left the company's Ginza headquarters, as well as its main factory, in rubble. This came as a significant blow because Shiseido's sales and business operations were largely centralized at its Ginza headquarters. Fortunately, Fukuhara

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<sup>24</sup> Toyama Hideo, "Bijutsukai no kōryū ni kiyo shita Shiseidō Gyārārī," in *Fukuhara Shinzō to bijutsu to Shiseidō* (Tokyo: Setagaya Bijutsukan, 2007), 13.

had opened a wholesale shop in Osaka in 1919, and Shiseido was able to shift its operations to this location and to Fukuhara's home in the Meguro section of Tokyo.<sup>25</sup> While it worked to rebuild, Shiseido was able to make a modest profit selling the extra soap it had in stock.

In the aftermath of the quake, many shops and cafes in Ginza quickly threw up temporary “barracks” from which they conducted business until they could rebuild permanent structures. Amid the rubble a group of artists saw an opportunity to use their talents to bring life back to the city and showcase their avant-garde art by decorating these barracks. They quickly organized to establish the Barracks Decoration Company.<sup>26</sup> Kon Wajirō, professor of architecture at Waseda University, was one of the artists behind this movement and his fascination with the barracks inspired him, along with Yoshida Kenkichi, to establish the field of Modernology (*kōgengaku*). According to Gennifer Weisenfeld, Kon and the other artists involved in the Barracks Decoration Company “saw the barrack decoration not only as a service to society and a means to achieve the spiritual renovation of Tokyo, but also as the first step toward revivifying the arts.”<sup>27</sup> A fervent supporter of the arts, Fukuhara turned to his old friend from Paris, artist Kawashima Ri'ichiro, to design and decorate Shiseido's barracks.

Kawashima designed the Shiseido barracks to look like a Parisian café. The end result looked far from a makeshift temporary structure. Opened on November 10, 1923, just two months after the earthquake, the Shiseido barracks was an all white building with five large windows in front and a door on each side that opened into a dining room decorated with elaborate chandeliers, white columns, and tables and booths for seating. Behind the sales counter were paintings of hunting scenes. The interior was completely white, with decorative

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<sup>25</sup> Shiseidō, *Shiseidō hyakunen-shi*.

<sup>26</sup> Gennifer Weisenfeld, "Designing After Disaster: Barrack decoration and the Great Kantō Earthquake," *Japanese Studies* 18, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*: 230.



paintings of bouquets adorning the walls and furniture. It was an elegant space that offered no trace of the tragedy that had come just months earlier. At the parlor, customers could dine on ice cream, cakes, and Western-style lunch items such as curry rice and beefsteak.

Nearly five years later, in 1928, Shiseido completed construction of its impressive new Tokyo headquarters. The new facility had a dining room that was two stories high, with balconies along the upper level. It was decorated with elegant chandeliers and featured an orchestra pit. Table settings included china embossed in gold leaf with Shiseido's camellia mark and fine silverware. Menus were written in both English and Japanese, and guests could indulge in a wide range of Western-style foods. The new facility was the height of luxury in the heart of Ginza and it was built much in the style of Tokyo's café culture, which was so popular in Ginza during the 1920s. The Shiseido Parlour had once again become one of the quintessential Ginza destinations. In 1931, one observer remarked, "When I sit down at a table here [at the Shiseido Parlour], I feel that I am truly in Ginza."<sup>28</sup>

The earthquake also proved to be a critical moment for Shiseido's business operations. The destruction of the flagship store in Ginza dealt a serious blow to the company's sales and distribution. In order to avoid a similar interruption in the future, Fukuhara initiated plans for a system of "chain stores" that would decentralize Shiseido's sales. This was an innovative business strategy that Fukuhara had borrowed from models used in the United States.<sup>29</sup> The chain store system enabled Shiseido to bring its products directly to consumers throughout the country by recruiting existing business owners to sell Shiseido products in their shops – most often drug stores and clothiers. As a result, Shiseido developed a distribution system that

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<sup>28</sup> Andō Kōsei, *Ginza saiken* (Tokyo: Shun'yōdō, 1931), 146.

<sup>29</sup> Fukuhara's explanation of the chain store system can be found in the inaugural issue of *Shiseido Geppō*. Fukuhara Shinzō, "Chain store soshiki ni tsuite," *Shiseidō geppō*, November 1924.

allowed it to establish standard prices for its products nationwide and expand its market beyond the major city centers. The chain store system was also significant because it created marketing outlets that helped to expose greater numbers of consumers to “Shiseido style.” Shiseido later used this system to its fullest advantage by dispatching groups of Miss Shiseido to conduct beauty demonstrations at chain stores, thereby bringing local customers into direct contact with the Shiseido brand in new ways.

By the time the print “Ginza Scene” appeared in the pages of *Fujin techō*, in 1927, Fukuhara had succeeded in transforming Shiseido into a maker of luxury cosmetics whose influence on modern culture extended to art, food, fashion, architecture, and design. “Ginza Scene” captured the essence of “Shiseido style,” a sophisticated blend of Japanese and Western influences. Fukuhara had crafted Shiseido’s corporate image not as an imitation of European cosmetics brands but as a Japanese company at the forefront of modern culture and style in Japan. This image shaped the ideals of feminine beauty that Shiseido promoted in its marketing to Japanese consumers, but it would also prove to be appealing for consumers in the empire as well.

### **Shiseido in the Empire**

In August 1929, Shiseido opened a chain store in Seoul, its first outlet outside of Japan. This was the first step in creating a distribution system that eventually stretched from Sakhalin Island in the north to Indonesia and Malaya in the south. By 1931, Shiseido had opened outlets in Taiwan and Manchuria, and it would soon expand into China. As the climate of war increased at home, bans on luxury items (*zeitakuhin*) went into effect for the domestic market, and items such as lipstick, cold cream, soap, laundry detergent, and toothpaste became subject to taxes of

as much as 40%. Furthermore, the state began restricting the import of many of the resources used in producing cosmetics, making it difficult for Shiseido to sustain its business in the domestic market.<sup>30</sup> These conditions forced Shiseido to turn to the empire for resources, production, sales, and research. For example, in 1939, Shiseido purchased a plantation outside of Taipei and used it as a research center to find ways around import restrictions. They used the plantation to identify plants that could be legally cultivated in Japan and used as perfume fragrances for the Japanese market.<sup>31</sup> A year later, Shiseido opened factories in Manchuria and Shanghai in an effort to circumvent export restrictions on domestically produced items.<sup>32</sup> While initial expansions into the empire aimed to increase profits and exploit new markets, by 1943 Shiseido had come to rely on the empire for its very survival.

In its advertising in the empire, Shiseido used its reputation as a Japanese maker of high-end cosmetics to try to lure both Japanese expatriates and colonial consumers to the Shiseido brand. But the specific advertising strategies Shiseido used differed depending on the market and its relationship with Japan. For example, in Taiwan and Manchuria, where animosity toward Japan was less pronounced than it was in places like China and Korea, Shiseido's marketing drew upon colonial ideas about the "Japanese modern." This was evident in the packaging of Shiseido's "Rose" vanishing cream. In 1931, the company reached an agreement with the Mitsui Corporation to produce cosmetics in Manchuria.<sup>33</sup> These products, which included cosmetics, soaps, laundry detergent, and toothpaste, were sold under the label "Blue Bird" (J: *seichō*; Ch: qing niao) and specifically targeted Manchurian (i.e. non-Japanese) consumers. In 1933,

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<sup>30</sup> Yamauchi Shizuko, "Miss Shiseidō kara byūtī konsarutanto e: sono rekishi to kon'nichi-teki yakuwari," *Eudermine* 2 (1997).

<sup>31</sup> Shiseidō, *Shiseidō hyakunen-shi*, 225.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

Shiseido arranged to have Mitsui produce the Blue Bird line for sale in Taiwan. Shiseido produced its “Rose” vanishing cream for both its domestic market and for its Blue Bird brand, and the labels for these products illustrate how Shiseido altered its marketing and advertising strategies for specific markets.

The packaging for the “Rose” vanishing cream, designed by artist Maeda Mitsugu, was nearly identical for the Japanese market and for markets in Taiwan and Manchuria.<sup>34</sup> The artwork on the box featured a drawing of a woman who appears to be Asian gazing into a mirror that she holds in her right hand. This image fit neatly into what Barlow has identified as the “cliché of girl, mirror, and product” that advertisers frequently used during this period.<sup>35</sup> The colors of the boxes differed slightly, with the Japanese version done in white with green, red, and black accents and the Blue Bird version done almost entirely in yellow. But the most significant difference between the two boxes was in the script. On the Japanese box, all of the text appeared in English, while the box for the Taiwanese and Manchurian markets featured text written entirely in Japanese. In fact, the effect for consumers in Japan and in the colonies was quite similar. For much of its marketing in the domestic market, Shiseido used English, French, and Romanized Japanese to evoke a sense of the foreign for Japanese consumers.<sup>36</sup> Other Japanese cosmetics makers used the same technique because consumers associated this language with the

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<sup>34</sup> Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, ed., *Bi to chi no mīmu, Shiseidō*.

<sup>35</sup> Barlow notes that this image was not limited to cosmetics, but was used for a host of other items targeted at female consumers, including Kotex, cleaning solutions, and department stores. Tani E. Barlow, “Buying In: Advertising and the sexy Modern Girl icon in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, modernity, and globalization*, ed. Tani E. Barlow, et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 295.

<sup>36</sup> Shiseido was one of the first Japanese companies to use the alphabet in its marketing. In 1897, the label for its Eudermine lotion was written in Roman letters.

West, which represented the pinnacle of modern culture and style.<sup>37</sup> But not all colonial consumers looked to the West in the same way. In fact, as Leo Ching has demonstrated, for people in Taiwan, “Japan irrefutably represented the modern, as compared to the colonizing West.”<sup>38</sup> This was a critical point that illustrated the brilliance of Fukuhara’s vision in building Shiseido as a Japanese cosmetics maker that was on par with some of the finest makers in Paris and New York. It was Shiseido’s identity as a Japanese company that made it attractive to consumers in the empire. Thus, the use of Japanese on its products would have enhanced Shiseido’s image for consumers in Taiwan and Manchuria in much the same way that the use of English would have for consumers in Japan. The Blue Bird brand was an example of how Shiseido drew upon Japan’s own status as a modern imperial power in the marketing of its products to colonial consumers.

But the circumstances were much different in China, where tensions with Japan were on the surface. Shiseido first tested the Chinese market in 1935, when it set up a kiosk in a luxury hotel in Shanghai, and it soon opened chain stores in Qingdao, Tianjin, Beijing, and a host of other cities throughout China. Beginning in 1941, Shiseido featured actress Li Xianglan in posters for vanishing cream, soap, and other skin products. In these ads, Li wore sleeveless *qipao* and sported a permed hairstyle, and her appearance was unmistakably “Chinese.” The use of a Chinese model in advertisements for the Chinese market played on desires for “a future

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<sup>37</sup> For more on the use of English in advertising by the Japanese cosmetics industry, see Laura Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring contemporary Japanese body aesthetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 176-94.

<sup>38</sup> Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 29.

when China, as Japan already had, would belong to the family of advanced nations.”<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, Shiseido used Li in its ads as a modern Chinese woman.

However, Li was not a typical “Chinese” woman. In fact, she was born Yamaguchi Yoshiko, in 1920, to Japanese parents.<sup>40</sup> Her father worked for the Southern Manchurian Railroad and her mother had come to Manchuria from Japan as a mail-order bride. While Li/Yamaguchi was attending boarding school in Beijing, she stayed with a Chinese family and lived as a “Chinese” woman. She managed to manipulate her two identities as she worked her way up the ranks of the Manchurian Film Association, eventually becoming a movie star and singer in China and Manchuria. Li/Yamaguchi’s allegiances were ambiguous, as she made propaganda films that introduced Japan to Manchurian audiences, as well as films that celebrated Japan’s conquest of Asia.<sup>41</sup> Although she was able to keep her “Japanese” identity a secret from the Chinese government until near the end of the war, she was eventually forced to prove that she was in fact Japanese in order to avoid execution on charges of treason. By showing Chinese

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<sup>39</sup> Barlow, "Buying In: Advertising and the sexy Modern Girl icon in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s," 313.

<sup>40</sup> Li/Yamaguchi went by a number of names, including Ri Kō-ran (the Japanese pronunciation of her Chinese name), Pan Shuhua, and Shirley Yamaguchi. When she married, she took her husband’s name and is known today as Ōtaka Yoshiko. She went on to make movies in Hollywood before returning to Japan where she was elected to the Diet in the postwar period. For more on Li/Yamaguchi’s extraordinary life and career, see her memoirs: Yamaguchi Yoshiko, *"Ri Kō-Ran" o ikite: Watashi no rirekisho* (Tokyo: Nippon Keizai Shinbunsha, 2004), Yamaguchi Yoshiko and Fujiwara Sakuya, *Ri Kō-ran watashi no hansei* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1987).

<sup>41</sup> Miriam Rom Silverberg, "Remembering Pearl Harbor, Forgetting Charlie Chaplin, and the Case of the Disappearing Western Woman: A picture story," in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 280.

authorities that she was a “colonizer passing as colonized,” Li/Yamaguchi was able to plead her case as an “enemy combatant” rather than a traitor.<sup>42</sup>

Li/Yamaguchi’s ability to navigate between her two identities highlights the flexibility of national and racial/ethnic identities at this time. She explained in her autobiography that she was able to “pass” as Chinese by manipulating her body language – such as by not smiling as much and not bowing as frequently. It was her physical appearance, as much as her linguistic capabilities that signified her identity as either “Chinese” or “Japanese.” As a company in the business of transforming women’s physical appearance, Shiseido’s choice of Li/Yamaguchi as the face of its operations in China was powerful. Although it is unclear whether Shiseido was aware of Li/Yamaguchi’s dual identities, she was nevertheless a prime example of the transformative powers of cosmetics. The message that these ads conveyed was that by using Shiseido products Chinese women could become “modern,” even if they could not, as Li/Yamaguchi could if she chose, become “Japanese.”

In the South Seas, Shiseido’s advertising aimed to teach colonial audiences how to become modern. The underlying assumption in these ads was that there was a clear distinction between the “civilized” Japanese and the “backward” islanders, but that using Shiseido products could help bridge this divide. In 1931, Shiseido began “exporting” its products with Japanese merchants who traveled to the region, and by the start of the Pacific War it had established outlets in Indonesia, Malaya, and the Philippines. In fliers and posters, the company targeted colonial consumers by using a combination of Japanese and local languages. One flier from 1941 included photographs of six Shiseido products, with their names written in both katakana

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<sup>42</sup> Tani E. Barlow, "History and the Border," *Journal of Women's History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 26, Silverberg, "Remembering Pearl Harbor, Forgetting Charlie Chaplin, and the Case of the Disappearing Western Woman: A picture story," 259.

(Japanese syllabary used for foreign words) and Malay. Also included were brief descriptions of the products in Malayan, along with drawings that illustrated how to use each product. In another example from Malaya, a flier advertising “Shiseido cosmetics” showed a photograph of an Asian woman dressed in kimono, and to the left a chart of the katakana syllabary along with the corresponding Romanization to help local people understand how to pronounce each character. In the far left margin was a drawing of Shiseido’s Ginza headquarters and a list of shops where Shiseido products could be found locally. In both of these fliers, Shiseido took the position of a “Japanese” company that was interested in teaching local women how to become “modern.” By showing them how to use cosmetics and how to read Japanese, Shiseido ostensibly gave local women some of the tools necessary for assimilation. In this sense, Shiseido’s marketing overlapped in important ways with Japan’s assimilation (*dōka*) policies and echoed the discourses on ethnic costumes in the South Seas.<sup>43</sup>

Shiseido’s activities in the empire introduced millions of colonial consumers to modern cosmetics, to the Shiseido brand, and to specific ideals of feminine beauty. Equally important was the fact that Shiseido products and marketing helped shape colonial ideas about Japan and Japanese culture. In Taiwan and Manchuria, Shiseido contributed to the widespread belief that Japan, and not the West, was the pinnacle of modern culture. In China, Li/Yamaguchi was the face of Shiseido, a “Chinese” woman who used Shiseido products to achieve her modern look. In spite of Li/Yamaguchi’s complicated identity, by not promoting specifically “Japanese” ideals Shiseido was able to appeal directly to Chinese desires for belonging among the modern,

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<sup>43</sup> For more on *dōka*, see Ching, *Becoming "Japanese": Colonial Taiwan and the politics of identity formation*, Ronald P. Toby, "Education in Korea under the Japanese: Attitudes and manifestations," in *Occasional Papers on Korea: Number one*, ed. James B. Palais (New York: Joint Committee on Korean Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Sciences Research Council, 1974).



advanced nations of the world. And in the South Seas, Shiseido's advertising contributed to Japan's reputation as a benevolent colonizer interested in helping colonial women become civilized. While the imperial state had a vested interest in establishing Japan's cultural authority vis-à-vis its colonies in order to maintain control and expand the empire, these marketing strategies show how Shiseido participated in shaping colonial ideas about Japan. In this sense, Shiseido played an important role in enabling Japan's project of empire, much as the fact of empire helped shape "Shiseido style."

### **Miss Shiseido and Japan's Imperial Makeover**

Shiseido's marketing and advertising campaigns helped shape Japanese ideals of femininity at home and enhance Japan's association with the modern for consumers in the empire, but the production of "Shiseido style" was not exclusively a discursive project. While female consumers unquestionably were the objects of Shiseido's marketing, the figure of Miss Shiseido actively shaped "Shiseido style" through her direct contact with consumers. From 1934 to 1937, Miss Shiseido was the face of the company, but within the company she was also regarded as an expert on cosmetics and on Shiseido's corporate structure and practices. Through her work as company representative, Miss Shiseido helped shape and promote new practices of beauty, but through her various responsibilities at Shiseido she became a highly visible example of the professional working woman and in the process challenged conventional notions of femininity.

The search for Miss Shiseido began in 1933, when Shiseido ran advertisements looking for "girls from good families" in major newspapers. More than 250 women responded to these

ads in hopes of becoming the first “Miss Shiseido.”<sup>44</sup> The aim of the campaign was to bring consumers into direct contact with the Shiseido brand and inspire in them a desire for Shiseido products. Not only would Miss Shiseido be a model of modern fashion and cosmetics, but she would also be responsible for teaching women how to achieve a modern look.

The idea for Miss Shiseido grew out of a recent phenomenon known as the “Mannequin Girl.” Mannequin Girls first appeared in 1928 as part of the Takashimaya Department Store’s display at the National Industrial Exhibition in Ueno Park. Visitors to the display were surprised and delighted when they began to notice that the “mannequins” in the display were actually real people. The novelty proved to be a huge success and soon every major department store in Tokyo was using Mannequin Girls to promote the latest fashions. Before long, individual companies began hiring Mannequin Girls to advertise a variety of products, from soap to chocolate.

The Mannequin Girls were effectively Japan’s first fashion models and they enjoyed tremendous popularity that rivaled that of movie stars. It was also highly lucrative work for women. At a time when women’s wages were significantly lower than men’s, Mannequin Girls made about 240 yen per month compared to 60 yen per month for college educated salary men. Former Mannequin Girl, Maruyama Miyoko, explained in her memoir that the life of a Mannequin was much like that of modern day television stars.<sup>45</sup> Each girl worked from ten o’clock in the morning until six o’clock at night, had a personal assistant, and received lunch from her employer. By all accounts, it was excellent work for a young woman in the late 1920s.

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<sup>44</sup> Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, ed., *Bi o tsutaeru hitotachi: Shiseidō byūitō konsarutanto shi* (Tokyo: Kyūryūdō, 2001), 22.

<sup>45</sup> Maruyama Miyoko, *Manekin gāru: shijin no tsuma no Shōwa-shi* (Tokyo: Jiji tsūshinsha, 1984).

The success of the Mannequin Girls led Yamano Chieko, who had pitched the original idea to Takashimaya, to organize the “Japan Mannequin Club” (*Nippon manekin kurabu*).<sup>46</sup> As head of this group, Yamano acted as an agent between the Mannequins and the stores and companies looking to hire them. Yamano was an influential figure in the world of beauty culture in Japan. She traveled frequently to the United States and Europe and helped introduce many of the technologies and innovations she encountered there, including the permanent machine (with Helen Grossman) and a skin treatment that used infrared technology to achieve younger looking skin. Yamano was also a very talented entrepreneur and established numerous branches of her famous beauty salon all across the country.<sup>47</sup>

For companies, one factor that made the Mannequin Girls such an effective marketing tool was the fact that they brought consumers face to face with the product. In the case of fashion, women who visited department stores could see the latest styles in person. This experience would have been quite different from seeing photographs in a magazine. By seeing new styles on models, women could get a better sense not only of how the clothes looked but also of how the clothes should be worn. After all, the 1920s were a time when fashions and styles were in flux and many women were still learning how to wear *yōfuku* and new *wafuku* trends.

Shiseido first hired a Mannequin Girl in 1929 to promote its line of “New Mix Toothpaste.”<sup>48</sup> They turned to Yamano’s Japan Mannequin Club and requested the services of a

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<sup>46</sup> Yamano Chieko, *Hikari o motomete: watashi no biyō 35-nen shi* (Tokyo: Salon de beauté, 1956). For more on Yamano, see also Yamano Chieko, *Josei no sōzō* (Tokyo: Seimei no geijutsu-sha, 1935).

<sup>47</sup> For more on Yamano and her salon, see Yoshiyuki Aguri, *Yusura'ume ga minoru toki* (Tokyo: Bun'en-sha, 1985).

<sup>48</sup> Komiya Shigemi, “Komai Reiko to Misu Shiseidō: Sono tanjō to katsudō no kiseki,” *Eudermine* 19, no. 12 (2005): 149.

young mannequin by the name of Komai Reiko. For one week, Komai stood in Shiseido's Ginza shop holding a placard for the new product. While this gig did not require Komai to interact with customers, they nevertheless would have observed her as she stood there in a lovely white *yōfuku* dress and her *mimikakushi* hairdo. In this sense, she was as much a model of modern fashion as she was of New Mix toothpaste. As Gennifer Weisenfeld has noted, this kind of promotional campaign was not unique to Shiseido. She points out that the Kao Soap Company employed the popular actress Hosokawa Chikako, dressed her in Kao logo garments and had her stand with staff at the Matsuzakaya Department Store.<sup>49</sup> These campaigns attracted consumer interest, but the models had little to do with the specific products they were promoting.

In September 1932, Shiseido once again turned to Mannequin Girls for help in launching its new line of Ginza Soaps.<sup>50</sup> Shiseido introduced its Ginza line as a lower-cost alternative to its regular line of products in an effort to appeal to a wider range of consumers. Shiseido claimed that its Ginza line met the same high quality standards as its regular cosmetics, but the lower cost helped the company meet the demand for more affordable products that was hastened by increased militarism and Japan's escalating war involvement. In order to promote this new line, Shiseido hired 12 Mannequin Girls to march down Ginza's main boulevard. Ten of the women wore evening dresses and carried parasols labeled with "Shiseido Ginza Soap," while the other two were dressed to look like Little Bo Peep and carried flowers and handed out fliers to passersby along the way. These women came to be known as Shiseido's "parasol girls." A video of the parasol girls' procession down Ginza Avenue shows that they walked in an informal

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<sup>49</sup> Gennifer Weisenfeld, "Selling Shiseido: Cosmetics advertising and design in early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japan," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/shiseido\\_01/sh\\_essay03.html](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/shiseido_01/sh_essay03.html) (accessed 02/08/2010)

<sup>50</sup> Shiseidō, *Shiseidō shashi: Shiseidō to Ginza ayumi 85-nen*, 299.

line and mingled with fellow pedestrians along busy sidewalks.<sup>51</sup> As they made their way down the avenue, their bright chiffon dresses and white parasols stood out against other pedestrians, most of whom were dressed in darker-colored kimono. They attracted looks of curiosity from others on the street, but they did not attract a crowd. The procession ended with the parasol girls crowding into Shiseido's shop before reassembling on the sidewalk outside. As Weisenfeld has observed, the Parasol Girls represented an interesting paradox:

“While ostensibly child-like and innocent in character, perhaps even maternal in her apron-clad uniform of fanciful domesticity, the Bo Peep shepherdess is also potentially sexualized as she is conflated with the perennially sexy image of the French maid.... Bo Peep, along with the liberated feminine icons represented by the Shiseido ladies [Parasol Girls], is clearly exotic and enticing as well as beautiful.”<sup>52</sup>

The Parasol Girls promoted a beauty ideal that was not overtly sexual, but it was nevertheless provocative because it was a departure from traditional ideals and because it drew upon the familiar tropes of the maid café and Modern Girl. Shiseido was, after all, in the business of transforming women's practices of beauty. The Parasol Girl campaign lasted one month and the parasol girls' routes expanded to cover many of Tokyo's main thoroughfares.<sup>53</sup>

In January 1933, Shiseido once again turned to Komai for another promotional campaign. This time, she conducted beauty demonstrations for Shiseido at department stores in Osaka and Tokyo. In contrast to the “New Mix” campaign, in which Komai merely stood holding a placard, these beauty demonstrations required her to interact with customers and show them how

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<sup>51</sup> MIT's “Visualizing Cultures” website includes a link to a video of the parasol girls from Shiseido's archives. Gennifer Weisenfeld, “Selling Shiseidō: Cosmetics advertising and design in early 20th-century Japan,” Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/shiseido\\_01/sh\\_essay01.html](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/shiseido_01/sh_essay01.html). (Accessed 03/22/2010)

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Shiseidō, *Shiseidō hyakunen-shi*, 175.

to use specific products. This was a significant shift from the work of a typical Mannequin Girl. What began as a one-week engagement was soon extended in response to the consistently large crowds that Komai attracted. Chain store owners outside of the major city centers began requesting that Komai come to them and conduct demonstrations for local markets. Over the course of several months, Komai visited cities around the country and performed her demonstrations. The success of Komai's campaign led Shiseido to draw up plans for "Miss Shiseido," a marketing campaign that would bring similar demonstrations to greater numbers of women and enhance Shiseido's visibility with consumers who were eager to learn modern beauty techniques. In order to help with the recruitment and training of the inaugural group of Miss Shiseido, the company invited Komai to work as a full-time consultant. Although Shiseido's offer came with the promise of long-term, stable work and a generous, steady income, an attractive offer by any standard, there was no guarantee that Komai would accept. In fact, Komai was an influential figure in the Mannequin world and she was faced with a difficult decision regarding Shiseido's offer.

### **Komai Reiko**

Born in 1908 in Tottori Prefecture as Hasegawa Kiyoko, Komai fled to Tokyo in 1929 after her fiancé, Asanuma Yoshimi, was arrested for violating Japan's Peace Preservation laws.<sup>54</sup> Asanuma was a student activist who was involved in the socialist movement. Soon after arriving in Tokyo, Komai found work as a Mannequin Girl and became one of twenty women who formed the Japan Mannequin Club under the direction of Yamano Chieko. But Komai quickly

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<sup>54</sup> Very little has been written about Komai, and I have been unable to find many primary sources that provide insight into her life. Here, I draw heavily from an excellent article published in Shiseido's in-house research publication: Komiya Shigemi, "Komai Reiko to Misu Shiseidō: Sono tanjō to katsudō no kiseki."

grew frustrated with Yamano's practice of taking a percentage off the top of the mannequins' wages and she left the Club to start a rival group of her own, the "Tokyo Mannequin Club" (*Tōkyō manekin kurabu*). Some in the Mannequin community criticized Komai for her socialist activities.<sup>55</sup> Komai shared Asanuma's commitment to fighting for workers' rights, and after leaving Yamano's Club, she soon became an influential advocate for working women's rights. In 1932, Komai created a second group, Fem Fonc, which functioned as a kind of informal union for working women of all kinds in Tokyo, from mannequins and typists to dressmakers and stenographers.<sup>56</sup> As head of this group, Komai helped place women in jobs and made sure that they received adequate compensation. Although little has been written about Komai outside of her role as Miss Shiseido, her commitment to fighting for working women's rights made her an important figure within the community of working women in Tokyo.

Thus, when Shiseido came to Komai and asked her to sign on as a full-time consultant, she was faced with a difficult decision. Should she continue her work as a prominent advocate for working women's rights? Or, should she take on a steady and lucrative job working for a major company? As it turned out, Komai did not see these options as mutually exclusive. Shiseido scholar, Komiya Shigemi, has suggested that Komai likely took the job precisely because she knew it would increase her visibility as a successful, professional working woman.<sup>57</sup> In other words, Shiseido had essentially created an ideal platform from which Komai could advocate for working women's rights. As a wife and mother herself, Komai was now in a position to demonstrate to larger numbers of young women that they did not have to limit

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<sup>55</sup> Not surprisingly, Yamano Chieko was one of Komai's most outspoken critics. See her memoir, Yamano Chieko, *Hikari o motomete: watashi no biyō 35-nen shi*. For more on Komai's socialist activities, see Maruyama Miyoko, *Manekin gāru: shijin no tsuma no Shōwa-shi*.

<sup>56</sup> Komiya Shigemi, "Komai Reiko to Misu Shiseidō: Sono tanjō to katsudō no kiseki," 150.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*: 151.

themselves to the traditional role of the “good wife and wise mother” but could also aspire to a professional career. As the first “Miss Shiseido,” Komai became an influential voice in shaping the campaign and making Miss Shiseido into an example of the professional women who was a definitive expert in her field.

### **Becoming Miss Shiseido**

The idea for Miss Shiseido emerged at a time when there was heightened interest in what Jennifer Robertson has called “healthy-body beauty.”<sup>58</sup> The Miss Nippon beauty pageant of 1931, which was covered widely in newspapers at the time, emphasized the importance of physical attributes and condition to a woman’s overall beauty. While Shiseido was certainly looking for women who fit a particular physical profile, the company evaluated the applicants based on a combination of physical, cultural, and social characteristics. For its evaluation, Shiseido borrowed a list of 31 criteria from the Morinaga chocolate company, which had run a similar search for its “Sweet Girl” campaign a year earlier.<sup>59</sup> These criteria evaluated women based on family background, overall health and hygiene, disposition, modern sensibility, and confidence wearing Western clothes, not to mention physical characteristics such as having white teeth, a pretty face, and an average build. In other words, Shiseido was looking for upper-class women who fit the company’s cosmopolitan image. The kind of woman that Shiseido was recruiting was not dissimilar to the kind of woman they might have been targeting with *Ladies’ Handbook*.

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<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Ellen Robertson, “Japan’s First Cyborg? Miss Nippon, eugenics and wartime technologies of beauty, body and blood,” *Body & Society* 7, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>59</sup> Komiya Shigemi, “Komai Reiko to Misu Shiseidō: Sono tanjō to katsudō no kiseki,” 144.



Shiseido ultimately selected nine women from its pool of 250 applicants and promptly gave each woman a “Miss” pseudonym. They then endured an intensive seven-month training program in which they were schooled in a wide range of topics, including beauty techniques (e.g. face washing and manicure), hygiene, skin science, cosmetology, music, painting, and fashion, among others. Komai was a key figure in the women’s training. She served as an example for the new recruits to emulate, and she was a resident expert who instructed them in modeling, sales, and the art of interacting with customers. Komai also designed the fashionable *yōfuku* uniforms worn by Miss Shiseido. In addition to their work in the classroom, the new recruits visited the factory floor and local chain stores that sold Shiseido products in order to familiarize them with every aspect of the company, from production to sales. This, too, was an idea that Shiseido borrowed from Morinaga. This was necessary because, unlike the original Mannequin Girls, Miss Shiseido and the Sweet Girls were expected to interact with consumers and be knowledgeable about the company they were representing and the products they were promoting. Spectators had recently begun to mock Mannequin Girls because they were unable to speak intelligently when asked about specific products, so Morinaga instituted a comprehensive training program to make sure that its Sweet Girls were well informed about every aspect of the company and its products. Morinaga viewed the Sweet Girls as a critical point of contact between the company and the consumer. Shiseido took a similar approach and by the end of the seven-month training program, the nine Miss Shiseido had been well trained in beauty culture, modern culture, and the business of Shiseido.

Following their intensive training, the first group of Miss Shiseido made their debut onstage at Osaka’s Takashimaya Hall on April 4, 1934, in a production of a play entitled,

“Modern Beauty” (*Kindai biyō geki*).<sup>60</sup> This was an 80-minute play that included five scenes loosely organized around a suburban, middle-class family. The content conveyed tips on beauty techniques and showcased Shiseido’s cosmetics and other products. For example, in the opening scene one of the family’s teenage daughters explained to her aunt how she could treat her sunburned face with cold cream for younger looking skin. Other scenes included tips on proper techniques for brushing one’s teeth, how to prevent men’s hair loss with Shiseido’s “Flowline” hair tonic, the wonders of cream foundation, and a lesson for young women in how to do laundry. The final scene was a spectacular musical production that took place in a dance hall with flashing lights and grease paint. The shows attracted as many as 300 people at a time and the troupe performed three shows per day in cities large and small from April to October 1934.<sup>61</sup>

Following each performance, the nine Miss Shiseido quickly changed into their work uniforms (also designed by Komai) and offered individual beauty consultations to each and every member of the audience. In these consultations, Miss Shiseido evaluated a woman’s skin tone and complexion and advised her on which products she needed and how to use them. She then filled out a prescription form for the customer that included the name of the Shiseido product, the number of units, and the price, so she could purchase the necessary items.<sup>62</sup> The dynamic between Miss Shiseido and the consumer was not unlike that between a doctor and a patient. Modern cosmetics were still relatively new in Japan in the 1930s, so many of the women who met with Miss Shiseido were likely still unsure of how to use them. In this context, Miss Shiseido was the professional who had the knowledge and authority to determine what was best for the customer.

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<sup>60</sup> Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, ed., *Bi o tsutaeru hitotachi: Shiseidō byūitī konsarutanto shi*.

<sup>61</sup> Komiya Shigemi, "Komai Reiko to Misu Shiseidō: Sono tanjō to katsudō no kiseki," 154.

<sup>62</sup> A sample of the prescription form can be found here: "Kasakuhēn happyō," *Shiseidō Chain Store School News*, no. 20 (1936).

In 1935, Shiseido selected a new group of eight women to be the second group of Miss Shiseido.<sup>63</sup> This time, the women had to endure a three-month training session, about half as long as the inaugural group. Following the success of the beauty consultations conducted by the first group of Miss Shiseido, the company introduced what it called “Mobile Beauty Salons” (*biyō idō salon*).<sup>64</sup> As the name suggests, these Mobile Salons traveled to various locations around the country. In October and November, three groups of Miss Shiseido traveled separately in these Mobile Salons, visiting local Shiseido chain stores, department stores, and other public forums to give beauty advice to consumers. They traveled to cities large and small, including rural outposts such as Wajima, Kisarazu, Koto’ura, and Hirosaki. Beginning in 1936, the Mobile Salons also visited high schools and gave beauty demonstrations to help graduating young women look their best on graduation day. By Shiseido’s own estimates, more than 330,000 high school girls attended these demonstrations in 1936 alone.<sup>65</sup> By 1937, Shiseido had begun dispatching the Mobile Salon to the empire, visiting department stores, chain stores, and local meetings of the “Camellia Club” (*Hanatsubaki-kai*), Shiseido’s customer loyalty program, in Korea, Manchuria, and Taiwan.<sup>66</sup> The Mobile Salons brought an astonishing number of consumers into contact with the Shiseido brand, modern notions of feminine beauty, and new techniques for using Western-style cosmetics.

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<sup>63</sup> Shiseido later selected eight in 1936, and three in 1937, the final year of the campaign. See Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, ed., *Bi o tsutaeru hitotachi: Shiseidō byūitō konsarutanto shi*, 26.

<sup>64</sup> For a report on the debut of the Mobile Salons, and a photomontage of an event in Osaka, see “Misu Shiseidō biyō idō salon no jikkyō,” *Shiseidō Chain Store School News*, no. 9 (1935).

<sup>65</sup> Shiseidō, *Shiseidō hyakunen-shi*, 204.

<sup>66</sup> “Misu Shiseidō no katsuyaku: Kakuchi idō salon no jikkyō,” *Shiseidō Chain Store School News*, no. 18 (1936), Shiseidō, *Shiseidō hyakunen-shi*, 224, Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, ed., *Bi o tsutaeru hitotachi: Shiseidō byūitō konsarutanto shi*, 27. The Camellia Club was introduced in 1937 for domestic customers. Members received benefits, including discounts and an annual gift, as well as Shiseido publications.

In addition to beauty demonstrations, Miss Shiseido's other duties involved helping with the training of new employees and acting as a quality control manager during visits to local chain stores. In 1935, Shiseido established a Chain Store School where new chain store owners and saleswomen attended ten-day training sessions in Tokyo. From 1935 to 1937, Shiseido held 55 training sessions and graduated more than 1,400 new employees. This training included a variety of lectures, talks, and classes on customer interaction, beauty techniques, and Shiseido business culture. Komai Reiko and the other Miss Shiseido made appearances at these sessions, both as models of modern beauty and as instructors. They introduced the latest Shiseido products, explained new sales strategies, and offered advice on how to answer questions from customers. Students described the experience of seeing Miss Shiseido in person as "like a dream," and both men and women frequently cited this as the highlight of their training.<sup>67</sup>

Miss Shiseido also made frequent trips to chain stores, both as a promotional strategy and as a kind of quality control measure. In Yamagata Prefecture, for example, Miss Harumi was able to increase sales by making house calls to Shiseido's best customers and selling them products in their homes – a method not dissimilar to that made famous by Avon in the United States.<sup>68</sup> She would ask the chain store owner to notify his best customers prior to her visit. These women would then invite their neighbors and friends to join Miss Harumi's demonstration, where everyone received free beauty advice. Traveling from place to place on a motorbike, Miss Harumi provided beauty consultations for individual customers and visited local chain stores to offer advice to owners about the latest product lines and give tips on how to display their Shiseido inventory. Chain store owners widely credited Miss Harumi with giving

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<sup>67</sup> "Sotsugyōsei dayori," *Shiseidō Chain Store School News*, no. 1 (1935), Ibuka Akira, "Sukūru sotsugyōsei: kaihōki," *Shiseidō Chain Store School News*, no. 5 (1935).

<sup>68</sup> Ibuka Akira, "Yamagata e: Sukūru sotsugyōsei o hōmon suru no ki," *Shiseidō Chain Store School News*, no. 3 (1935).

Yamagata an impressive sales record and it quickly became impossible for her to keep pace with the demand for her services.

Shiseido employees expressed tremendous respect for Miss Shiseido's knowledge and expertise. In a roundtable discussion, Tokyo chain store owners expressed their desire to have one- or two-day training sessions with Miss Shiseido to help teach their employees such things as proper manners and how to use an abacus. Male and female graduates of the chain store school agreed that the company needed to expand the number of Miss Shiseido in order to meet the demand for their services.<sup>69</sup> For Shiseido, visits like Miss Harumi's were a means by which the company could ensure consistency in product display and marketing from one store to the next across the country.

From 1934 to 1937, Miss Shiseido exposed millions of women (and men) in Japan and around the empire to a particular ideal of the modern woman through performances, beauty demonstrations, and other events promoting Shiseido cosmetics. Far from threatening, Miss Shiseido was a role model for many consumers who desired to be like her – smart, stylish, beautiful, and modern. In her various roles, Miss Shiseido was given a tremendous amount of trust and responsibility and stretched the boundaries of femininity in subtle but significant ways. Female consumers looked to her for advice on how to choose and apply the cosmetics that best suited their complexions and skin tones. Male chain store owners respected her for her expertise and begged the company to send her to their stores to get a boost in sales and learn about the latest Shiseido products. And executives at Shiseido trusted her to train new employees and help maintain consistency among its system of chain stores. In many ways, Miss Shiseido became precisely what Komai had envisioned: a highly visible example of the progressive Japanese

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<sup>69</sup> "Tokyo sukūru zadankai," *Shiseidō Chain Store School News*, no. 11 (1936).

woman. Although Miss Shiseido did not radically alter feminine norms, she brought consumers into direct contact with new notions of femininity and played an important role in teaching a new generation of women how to use cosmetics to achieve a modern look.

Shiseido ended the Miss Shiseido campaign after 1937, in large part due to her own success. Instead of selecting only a handful of women each year, the company began training “salesgirls,” who performed the work of Miss Shiseido while based in local chain stores.<sup>70</sup> Whereas Miss Shiseido was a national- (even imperial-) level campaign, the salesgirls were localized and developed personal relationships with regular customers.<sup>71</sup> Shiseido revived Miss Shiseido after the war in an effort to jumpstart sales. In spring 1948, six Miss Shiseido began touring the country once again and helped put Shiseido on track to becoming the largest cosmetics maker in Asia.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined how Shiseido marketed its products and the Shiseido brand to consumers both in Japan and around the empire. In Japan, what came to be known as “Shiseido style,” a modern, cosmopolitan look that brought together Japanese and Western influences, shaped the ideals of feminine beauty that the company promoted in its marketing. Miss Shiseido was the embodiment of those ideals and through beauty demonstrations, employee training, and visits to local chain stores she brought millions of consumers into contact with the Shiseido brand in the 1930s. Miss Shiseido was also a highly visible example of a woman who

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<sup>70</sup> Shiseido kigyō bunka-bu, *Tsukutte kita mono, tsutaete yuku mono: Shiseidō 120-nen shi*, 72-73. For a report on a local Mobile Salon conducted by a Shiseido salesgirl at a girls high school, see “Biyō salon hōmon,” *Hanatsubaki*, March 1938.

<sup>71</sup> A 1936 article in the Shiseido Chain Store School News announced Miss Shiseido’s fall schedule and noted that she would be visiting cities in Japan, Korea, and Manchuria, and that plans to visit Taiwan in the spring were in the works. “Kasakuhen happyō.”

was at once smart, confident, professional, and successful in her work outside of the domestic realm, while still remaining beautiful, feminine, and sufficiently “Japanese.” Unlike the Modern Girl (*moga*), Miss Shiseido was not “militant” and she did not threaten to destabilize the gendered social order, rather she worked within the boundaries of socially acceptable feminine behavior.<sup>72</sup> To be sure, Miss Shiseido did her part to reinforce traditional gender roles in some ways – not the least of which was instilling in young women the idea that they needed cosmetics to be beautiful – but she also represented social progress for women.<sup>73</sup>

As a company with extensive operations in the empire, Shiseido participated in the ideological work of empire through its marketing across East and Southeast Asia. What enabled Japan to establish its cultural authority vis-à-vis Asian colonial others, a critical component in any imperial project, was its ability to define itself as modern and civilized against its “backward” and “nonmodern” colonial others.<sup>74</sup> This required loosening the constraints on women’s social role and the modern woman became a symbol of social progress. Thus, when Miss Shiseido traveled to Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria, she strengthened Japan’s claims as a modern imperial power by appearing in public as an example of the beautiful, smart, and progressive woman. In other contexts, Shiseido promoted itself as a Japanese company that could transform colonial women into modern women. The use of “Chinese” model Li/Yamaguchi highlighted the transformative powers of cosmetics and promoted the image of a “Chinese” modern woman. In Southeast Asia, Shiseido advertisements contributed to the imperial state’s assimilation project by teaching women how to use modern cosmetics and how

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<sup>72</sup> Silverberg, "The Modern Girl as Militant."

<sup>73</sup> For more on feminist arguments regarding cosmetics, see Kathy Lee Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The making of America's beauty culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998).

<sup>74</sup> Alan S. Christy, "The Making of Imperial Subjects in Okinawa," in *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, ed. Tani E. Barlow (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 147.

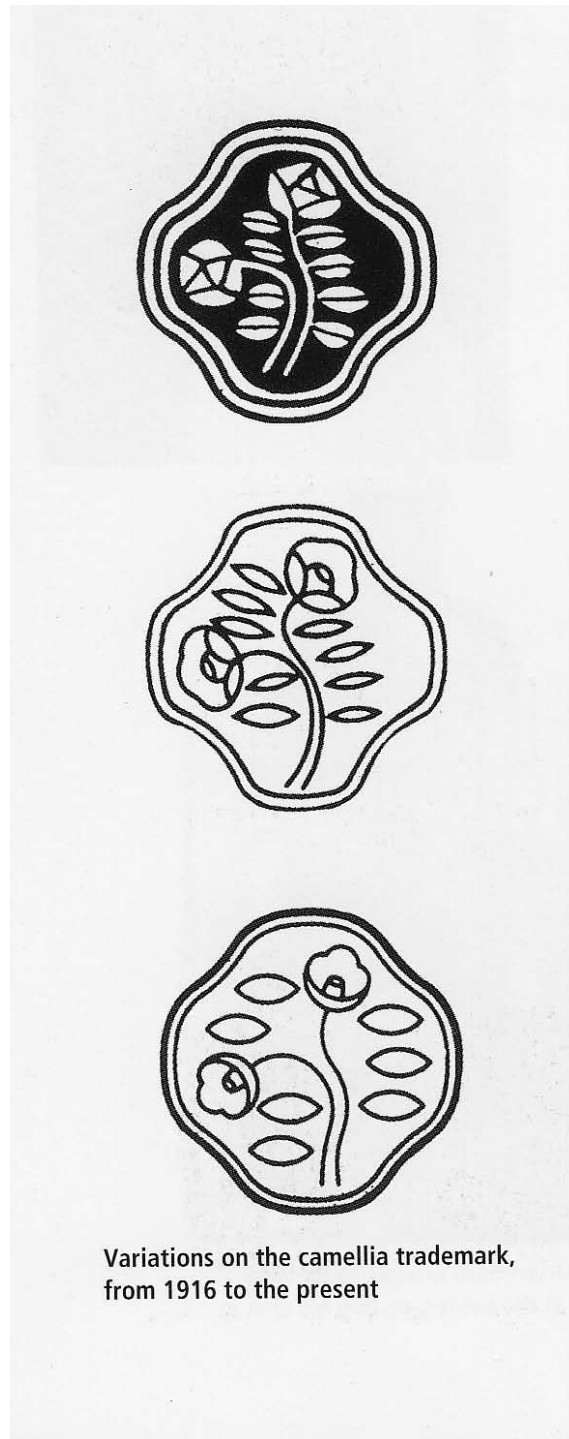
to read Japanese. Shiseido's marketing strategies both in Japan and around the empire combined to strengthen Japan's image as a modern civilized imperial power and call attention to the constitutive role that women and gender played in Japan's project of empire.



## Figures



**Figure 3.1** “Ginza Scene” (*Ginza fūkei*).  
Published in *Gofujin techō*, 1927



**Figure 3.2** Shiseido's Camellia Mark, original design by Fukuhara Shinzō.  
From *The Shiseido Story*, 2003





**Figure 3.4** Komai Reiko at Shiseido's New Mix Day.  
From *Bi o tsutaeru hitotachi*, 2001



**Figure 3.5** Miss Shiseido, 1934  
From *Bi o tsutaeru hitotachi*



**貴女の御化粧に**  
(For Your Beauty Formula)

昭和 年 月 日

正しい御化粧は麗人への超特急です

用途	順	早化粧	単価	順	社交化粧	単価	用途	順	早化粧	単価	順	社交化粧	単価
洗 顔		クレンジング クリーム	1.00				頬 紅		六 號	30			
化粧水							口 紅		ばら一號	50			
ク リ ー ム		オイデルミン	1.00				シャドー						
白 粉		コールドクリーム	50				摘 要	マツサージ コールド					
		クリームシャドウ											
		肌 一 號	50										
粉 白 粉													
		肌 色	70										

下地からお仕上げ迄すべて資生堂化粧品

擔當者 ミス・シセイドウ \_\_\_\_\_

**Figure 3.6** Miss Shiseido prescription form.  
From *Bi o tsutaeru hitotachi*



**Figure 3.7** Miss Harumi on her motorbike.  
From *Shiseido Chainstore School News*, 1936

**DENTOOK  
KESEHATAN  
DAN  
KESANGAN**

\*  
Alat untuk mencari kejantanan dan obati yang terasah  
dialokasikan  
Aksi Raja.

Dibuat oleh:  
**SHISEIDO**  
Goto, Tokyo, Japan





**シセイドウ** SHISEIDO  
**資生堂**

DIPUBLIKASIKAN  
YANGSEN 2722

ア	イ	ウ	エ	オ
カ	キ	ク	ケ	コ
サ	シ	ス	セ	ソ
タ	チ	ツ	テ	ト
ナ	ニ	ヌ	ネ	ノ
ハ	ヒ	フ	ヘ	ホ
マ	ミ	ム	メ	モ
ヤ	イ	ユ	エ	ヨ
ラ	リ	ル	レ	ロ
ワ	ウ	エ	オ	ヲ
ン				

ガ	ギ	グ	ゲ	ゴ
ザ	ジ	ズ	ゼ	ゾ
ダ	ヂ	ヅ	デ	ド
バ	ビ	ブ	ベ	ボ
パ	ピ	プ	ペ	ポ



シセイドウ ケシヨウヒン

**Figure 3.8** Shiseido advertisement for Malaysian market.  
From *Shiseido 100-nenshi*, 1972



## **Chapter 4**

### **Designing Woman:**

#### **Tanaka Chiyo, Gender Equality, and the Making of Modern Japanese Fashion**

Tanaka Chiyo (1906-1999), who has been called Japan's first fashion designer, was the daughter of a high-ranking diplomat who spent years living in Europe and the United States, and her cosmopolitan upbringing was characterized by a blend of Japanese and Western influences. Tanaka eventually became one of the leading experts on fashion and ethnic costumes in imperial Japan, and she contributed to the discourse on what Japanese women should wear through countless articles, books, and through her service on committees tasked with determining state policies on clothing and textiles. While most critics framed their arguments about what women should wear in terms of what was best "for the nation," Tanaka argued that discussions of fashion should take women as subjects and consider their lived experience of clothes. Tanaka was opposed to forcing women to wear any particular kind of clothing and instead advocated for women's right to choose what made the most sense based on their own individual lifestyles, personal tastes, and body types. In addition, Tanaka founded her own dressmaking school where she taught women everything they needed to know about *yōfuku* – from how to choose fabrics, match patterns, and when to wear various items to how to make and physically wear their designs of choice.

In her various roles as designer, author, and expert, Tanaka was an important advocate for women's independence and gender equality. Although Tanaka never identified herself as a feminist, her belief in gender equality undergirded her philosophy of fashion and her life as an entrepreneur and teacher made her a model of the successful working woman who balanced her career with her duties as wife and mother. In this chapter, I analyze how Tanaka pushed back

against critics who tried to control what women wore for the sake of the nation/empire and empowered Japanese women to make informed decisions about their wardrobes.

### **Cosmopolitan Roots**

Born Matsui Chiyo in Tokyo on August 9, 1906, Tanaka came from a distinctly cosmopolitan background. Her father, Matsui Keijirō (1868-1946), was a high-ranking diplomat who served in a variety of posts, including Ambassador to the United States and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the cabinet of Prime Minister Kiyoura Keigo.<sup>1</sup> Tanaka's mother, Teruko, was the daughter of the wealthy Imamura banking family. Six months after Tanaka was born, Teruko left to join her husband, who was stationed in Paris, leaving her infant daughter at home to be raised by Tanaka's maternal grandmother, Imamura Yasu.<sup>2</sup>

As the child of a wealthy Japanese family, Tanaka grew up in an environment that she described as a “blending of Japanese and western cultures” (*wayō secchū*). From her grandmother, Tanaka learned to appreciate Japanese culture. She learned to play samisen, studied calligraphy, and practiced *naginata* (Japanese halberd) with her grandmother each morning. Her grandmother also had an impressive collection of kimono, and Tanaka fondly remembered listening to her tell stories about each and every kimono – where they came from, what the colors and patterns indicated, and when to wear them. Tanaka also watched her grandmother regularly dye her own kimono fabric and she learned these techniques and used

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<sup>1</sup> Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, Onna ima ikiru (Kyōto: Minerva Shobō, 1984), 61.

<sup>2</sup> Tanaka's grandfather, Imamura Seinosuke, founded Imamura bank in 1888. The bank eventually dissolved in 1930 in the midst of the Great Depression. See Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari* (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihon-sha, 1994), 16, Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 39.

them to dye her own kimono throughout her lifetime.<sup>3</sup> But western culture and practices were also a part of everyday life for Tanaka. Her grandparents' home was a grand place done largely in western architecture, and original paintings by Monet and Cezanne adorned the walls of the family's sitting room.<sup>4</sup> The family also routinely dined on Western food and Tanaka rode to and from preschool in a horse-drawn carriage.

When she was five years old, Tanaka's parents returned to Japan and she moved with them into an extravagant Western-style diplomatic residence. While she had periodically received toys and other gifts from her mother and father, this was Tanaka's first opportunity to meet her parents face to face. After spending several years in Paris, her parents had relocated to Washington, DC, where her father served as ambassador to the United States. Along the way they had two children, a boy and a girl. Tanaka's brother and sister had never been to Japan, and they immediately encountered cultural differences. Tanaka's earliest memory of her brother was watching him walk into a tatami (straw mat) room at a Japanese inn without removing his shoes, an unthinkable act for anyone born and raised in Japan. Tanaka and her siblings were truly coming from different worlds.

For Tanaka, the most frustrating aspect of her family's return was the language barrier. She could barely communicate with her siblings because her brother's primary language was French and her sister's was English. Tanaka's mother communicated with each of her three children in their respective languages, and Tanaka grew frustrated and embarrassed because she could speak only Japanese. This resulted in an overall sense of inadequacy vis-à-vis her siblings as they began to pick up Japanese and could speak multiple languages. After several years,

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<sup>3</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 28, Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 58.

<sup>4</sup> Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 46.

Tanaka's father was once again sent to Paris as a high-ranking diplomat, but her parents decided to leave her behind because she could not speak French and they felt she would struggle in French schools.<sup>5</sup> So while the rest of her family moved to Paris, Tanaka once again remained in Japan in the care of her grandmother. Tanaka resolved to learn French and English, taking lessons from a private tutor and studying every night. Although she cherished the close relationship she developed with her grandmother, Tanaka longed to feel a sense of belonging with her parents and siblings and she dreamed of the day when she would be able to travel to the West.

When her family returned to Tokyo in September 1920, after nearly five years in Paris, Tanaka moved with them back into their official diplomatic residence. She felt even more distant from her family than before, and her sense of inadequacy only increased now that her siblings spoke French and Japanese fluently. Although Tanaka lacked the language skills and the international experience her siblings had, her upbringing was far from typical for most Japanese. Tanaka attended Futaba Girls' Middle School, a mission school attended by the daughters of diplomats and other government officials, she took private piano lessons, and her family regularly ate Western-style meals made by a full staff of cooks and served in a formal dining room. It was a highly cosmopolitan world where Japanese and Western practices and influences routinely overlapped, but navigating this cultural landscape was all that Tanaka knew.

As a high-ranking diplomat, Tanaka's father frequently hosted events for foreign dignitaries in the ballroom at his official residence. Although Tanaka and her siblings were too young to attend these events, they were able to catch glimpses of the activities as the guests arrived. Tanaka was fascinated by the elegant gowns and dresses worn by the wives of the

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<sup>5</sup> Her father was part of the Japanese delegation that participated in negotiations for the Treaty of Versailles. Ibid., 25.

distinguished guests. Although she was accustomed to wearing *yōfuku* on a regular basis, she had never seen this kind of formal wear in person. She admired the elaborate designs, the flowing dresses, and the sequined gowns. Years later, Tanaka would explain that the gowns she saw at these balls inspired her interest in fashion.<sup>6</sup>

### **Life in the Tanaka Home**

When Tanaka turned eighteen, she made her debut in Tokyo's high society at an event held in honor of the Prince of Wales during his visit to Tokyo.<sup>7</sup> The event was a cherry blossom viewing party so she wore a lavender *furisode* kimono with a sakura print.<sup>8</sup> Such debuts typically resulted in applications by families to arrange for their sons to meet with the young women and, if all went well, marry them. Tanaka declined inquiries from a number of diplomatic families, citing her poor language abilities and her lack of experience abroad as reasons why she could not see herself as a diplomatic wife. Instead, Tanaka accepted an offer for an arranged meeting (*omiai*) with the family of Tanaka Kaoru.

Tanaka Kaoru (1898-1982) was a young professor of economic geography at Tokyo Higher Commercial School (now Hitotsubashi University) and the son of a scholar, but the Tanaka family was not without diplomatic roots. Kaoru's grandfather, Fujimaro (1845-1909), was a viscount and traveled to the West with the Iwakura mission, from 1871-1873, to study the American education system. As Vice Minister of Education, from 1874-1880, Fujimaro was an

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 72-73.

<sup>8</sup> A *furisode* kimono is distinguished by its long sleeves and is typically worn by unmarried women. When a woman gets married she then wears kimono with shorter sleeves.

advocate of women's education in Japan.<sup>9</sup> Fujimaro's son, Akamaro (1869-1944), spent much of his childhood in Switzerland while his father served as Japanese ambassador first to Italy and later to France. He went on to pioneer the field of limnology in Japan.<sup>10</sup> Akamoro's son, Kaoru, followed in his father's footsteps and became a scholar.

Tanaka and Kaoru immediately hit it off and began spending time together quite regularly after the initial arranged meeting. They initiated their own private book club in which they got together and discussed books on a variety of topics. At first, Tanaka was concerned because she could not match Kaoru's level of education, but she soon found that she enjoyed reading with Kaoru because he engaged with her and valued her opinions and ideas. The couple quickly established a genuine friendship. They had mutual respect for one another and truly enjoyed each other's company. In 1924, they were married and Tanaka moved into her husband's family home.

Tanaka quickly learned that life in her new home would be quite different from what she was accustomed to. Most notably, she found that the Tanaka family was informal, fun loving, and engaging. This was quite a contrast with the formal surroundings of the Matsui household. While she had grown up eating in a formal dining room and taking meals very seriously, the Tanakas routinely crowded around the family's *chabudai* for lively conversation over a meal they prepared themselves. Nor was dinner necessarily served at a fixed time, as family members came and went at their leisure, fitting in meals around their busy and inconsistent schedules. The

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Lanman, *Leading Men of Japan, with an Historical Summary of the Empire* (Boston: D. Lothrop and company, 1883), 225-26. For more on Tanaka Fujimaro, see also Nishio Toyosaku, *Shishaku Tanaka Fujimaro den: denki Tanaka Fujimaro*, Denki sōsho ; (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1987), Brian Platt, *Burning and Building: Schooling and state formation in Japan, 1750-1890* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 218-19, Tanaka Fujimaro, *Beikoku Hyakunenki Hakurankai kyōiku hōkoku*, 4 vols. ([Tokyo]: Monbushō, 1877).

<sup>10</sup> Kenneth E. Wilkening, *Acid Rain Science and Politics in Japan: A history of knowledge and action toward sustainability* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 101.

lack of structure in daily life was both surprising and refreshing to Tanaka, though it required considerable adjustment.

Tanaka also found herself having to adjust to new ideas about gender roles in her new home. Growing up, Tanaka's mother was far from the traditional Japanese housewife. She rarely saw her mother during the day because she was busy with lunch dates, tea parties, and other duties in her capacity as diplomatic wife. Her mother did not cook or care for her children or bother with housework – she had a full staff of cooks, nannies, and maids for that – and she played an important strategic role in her husband's diplomatic duties, giving her a level of influence not typical of most Japanese housewives. Furthermore, while Tanaka's parents were stationed in Europe and the United States, they conformed to Western norms of gender relations, or what Tanaka called the “ladies first” mentality. As a result, Tanaka did not grow up with the expectation that she should become a “good wife and wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*), as many Japanese girls did; rather, she grew up in an environment where gender roles were distinct but women were respected and expected to play an important social role.

In the Tanaka household, she encountered what may have been an even more liberal interpretation of gender roles. Her husband and in-laws most certainly did not expect her to be a “good wife and wise mother,” and they in fact encouraged her to pursue new opportunities, even after her son was born in 1925. At the urging of the Tanaka family, she enrolled at Bunka Gakuin (Culture Academy) and began her undergraduate education. Tanaka chose Bunka in part because it was one of the only schools in Tokyo that allowed married women to take classes, and because it supported students with children by allowing them unprecedented flexibility in their class schedules.

Bunka Gakuin was founded in 1921 by Nishimura Isaku, who was an architect and an advocate for gender equality. Barbara Sato has described Nishimura as an outspoken critic of social inequality who started the school as a means of freeing women from their spiritual repression. Sato characterizes Nishimura's philosophy this way: "Gender differentiation violated the laws of nature and was unnatural and intolerable. Whether a woman could work up to her potential and develop her individual talents was the issue."<sup>11</sup> Bunka Gakuin was part of the free education (*jiyū kyōiku*) movement that emerged during the era of "Taishō Democracy" and challenged the state-sponsored school system, which promoted gender inequality by teaching girls to become "good wives and wise mothers" and did not permit girls to attend higher schools. The school had its own curriculum that was not approved by the Ministry of Education, no uniforms were required, and students were taught to be self-sufficient and economically independent. The aim of the school was not to encourage women to reject conventional gender roles but rather to create a society in which both men and women, as husbands and wives, would take equal responsibility for their households and develop their own individual talents.

One of Nishimura's primary supporters in establishing the school was Yosano Akiko, an accomplished poet and one of Japan's leading feminists and advocates of gender equality in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>12</sup> Yosano taught literature at Bunka Gakuin from its founding in 1921 until shortly before her death in 1942. Yosano, who supported her eleven children and her unemployed husband, embodied the core philosophy behind Bunka Gakuin. Although Tanaka

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<sup>11</sup> Barbara Hamill Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan* (Durham, [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2003), 41.

<sup>12</sup> For more on Yosano, see Laurel Rasplica Rodd, "Yosano Akiko and the Taishō Debate over the 'New Woman'," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The beginnings of feminist consciousness in modern Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983).



regarded Yosano's course on the *Tale of Genji* as her favorite at the school, she consistently resisted any suggestion that simply because she had studied under Yosano she was a feminist or an activist in any sense.<sup>13</sup> Still, Tanaka's life, career, and her philosophy of fashion reflected the lessons on gender equality and women's independence that she learned at Bunka Gakuin.

While Tanaka was taking courses at Bunka Gakuin, her husband was teaching at Jiyū Gakuen, which was another of the "liberal education" schools established in Tokyo during this time. Jiyū Gakuen was founded by Hani Motoko and her husband Yoshikaze. Hani was Japan's first female journalist and a pioneer of women's education, and had worked as editor of *Fujin no tomo*, one of Japan's most popular and influential prewar women's magazines. Like Bunka Gakuin, the idea behind Jiyū Gakuen was to promote gender equality by educating women to be well rounded and self-sufficient. In line with the school's mottos, "Be the Master of Yourself" and "Be Independent," the curriculum at Jiyū Gakuen was progressive and sought to teach women a variety of skills so that they would not have to be dependent on anyone.<sup>14</sup> Hani did not discourage students from marrying and having children, but she wanted them to graduate with the confidence and understanding that they did not have to depend on anyone, least of all their husbands. In addition to courses on history, literature, science, and the arts, students learned to cook, clean, make their own clothes, and they were expected to sustain the school community completely on their own.

Because Kaoru was teaching at Jiyū Gakuen, Tanaka had the opportunity to spend time with Hani and get to know her. Hani became a kind of informal mentor to Tanaka. She later provided her with opportunities to publish on fashion and dress, and her belief in individualism

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<sup>13</sup> Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 83-87.

<sup>14</sup> Yasuko Suga, "Modernism, Nationalism and Gender: Crafting 'modern' Japonisme," *Journal of Design History* 21, no. 3 (2008): 261.

and gender equality resonated with Tanaka and shaped her approach to fashion. Between the formal education she received at Bunka Gakuin and the intellectual relationship she shared with Hani, Tanaka came to believe that women did not have to be limited to their roles as wives and mothers, but rather should pursue their own interests as well. These ideas shaped her career and her approach to fashion in significant ways.

### **To Europe**

In 1928, Kaoru was working at Kobe Higher Commercial School (now Kobe University), and received a grant from the Ministry of Education to study in Europe. Encouraged by Kaoru's grandmother to join her husband, Tanaka jumped at the opportunity to travel abroad for the first time in her life. In a move that replicated her own experience as a child, the couple left their young son in the care of their two families in Tokyo and moved to London. The grant that Kaoru received provided the couple with only meager funds, so he bought a car, taught himself how to drive, and worked as a bellhop and driver to make ends meet. Meanwhile, Tanaka took courses at a local college to improve her English.

After one year in London, the couple moved to Oxford so that Kaoru could work with scholars who shared his intellectual interests. Although Tanaka joined him at first, she found the fog in Oxford to be bad for her lungs and moved to Brighton, leaving Kaoru behind. That Tanaka chose to venture out on her own was evidence of her own sense of independence. She rented a room from a Brighton family and took advantage of this situation to continue to improve her English. She befriended one of the daughters in the family, an actress in a local Shakespearean theater company, and volunteered to be the young woman's personal assistant. Tanaka attended her performances every night and helped her make costume changes. She fell

in love with the theater and her host family playfully teased her when she began using outdated English expressions she learned from the plays.

Tanaka was particularly fascinated by the elaborate period costumes the actors wore onstage. The costumes reminded her of the gowns guests wore to her parents' parties and she was eager to learn more about the history of fashion and how it had evolved. Her host family informed her that there was a small fashion school in town where she could take a class in fashion history if she was interested, and Tanaka jumped at the chance.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the class, Tanaka began reading everything she could find about fashion history in the local library. When she ran out of books there, she scoured used bookstores for more information. Before long she had familiarized herself with thousands of years of fashion history, beginning with ancient civilizations in Egypt, Greece, and Crete, and working her way to modern times in Europe and the United States.

In the spring of 1929, Kaoru was sent to Paris as part of his fellowship agreement and Tanaka left Brighton to join him. She was thrilled to be moving to the global center of fashion. But before long Kaoru found that he did not like living in Paris and he arranged to relocate to Berlin. Disappointed, Tanaka packed up her things and moved with her husband to Berlin. But after only a few weeks, she decided that she had to return to Paris in order to pursue her interest in fashion. Once again exhibiting her independent spirit, Tanaka left her husband behind in Berlin and rented a small room in Paris.

Fashion was everywhere Tanaka looked in Paris and she reveled in the opportunity to experience modern fashion firsthand. At local boutiques she found pieces by designers whose

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<sup>15</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 68.

labels she remembered seeing in her mother's wardrobe, such as Chanel, Lanvin, and Patous.<sup>16</sup> And in French issues of *Vogue* and *Butterick*, Tanaka was reminded of the elegant evening dresses worn by guests at her parents' parties. Inspired by these examples, Tanaka decided to give dressmaking a try. She had hated sewing as a child and did poorly in her sewing classes at school, but she rented a sewing machine from a local shop and used patterns in fashion books to try to bring designs to life.

One day, Tanaka came across a French issue of *Vogue* that included a special issue on opera costumes. The designs reminded her of the period pieces worn by the actors onstage at the Shakespearean theater in Brighton. Tanaka was so impressed with the costumes in this feature that she felt compelled to contact the designer responsible for them. She wrote a letter to Otto Haas-Heye, who taught fashion and design in Zurich, and explained to him that she admired his designs in the *Vogue* feature and wanted to study fashion and design under his direction.<sup>17</sup> Tanaka had little hope that Haas-Heye would respond to her letter, but a few days later she received an international phone call from the designer himself. Haas-Heye thanked Tanaka for her letter and invited her to come to Zurich to study at his School of Fashion and Dress (Die Mode und Tracht Schule). Two days later, Tanaka had packed up all of her things and found herself on a train to Zurich. Much to her relief, when the train pulled into the station Haas-Heye was there waiting for her on the platform.

Otto Haas-Heye had been an instructor at the renowned Bauhaus school in Berlin and before that opened his own fashion salon, the Modehaus Alfred-Marie.<sup>18</sup> According to German fashion historian Irene Guenther, Haas-Heye was instrumental in forging ties between the art and

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>18</sup> Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic?: Fashioning women in the Third Reich* (Oxford ; New York: Berg, 2004), 303.

fashion worlds in Germany during World War I. In the late 1920s, Haas-Heye fled Germany for Zurich where he opened the School of Fashion and Dress.<sup>19</sup> When Tanaka arrived, in 1930, there were approximately twenty students at the school, most of them foreign, but she was the first Japanese woman ever to attend the school. Classes were taught in English and lessons on fashion, textiles, furniture, and poster design focused specifically on design elements.

On Tanaka's first day, Haas-Heye required her to take an entrance exam. It was to be the first and perhaps most important lesson that Tanaka would learn from him. She sat at a desk in the back of the classroom and Haas-Heye placed a single leaf in front of her and asked her to draw it. Hesitant and self-conscious about her artistic abilities, Tanaka did the best she could to draw the leaf. Haas-Heye looked at her first attempt and instructed her to try again. Tanaka's second effort was no better and Haas-Heye told her to try again. This cycle continued for the rest of the morning and again after lunch, with Haas-Heye occasionally bringing tea for Tanaka as she worked. No matter how hard she tried, Haas-Heye was not satisfied. By the end of the day, Tanaka still had not produced an adequate leaf in Haas-Heye's eyes. Tanaka returned home (to a room that Haas-Heye had found for her) frustrated, perplexed, and concerned that she did not have what it took to make it at the school. When she returned the next morning, Tanaka found the wilted, lifeless leaf she had tried so earnestly to draw the day before still on the desk. Next to it was a fresh leaf, green and full of life. Once again, the assignment was the same – draw a leaf. This time, as she observed the contrast between the two leaves, Tanaka produced a drawing that captured the life and energy inherent in the fresh leaf. This was precisely what Haas-Heye was looking for. He explained that the exam was not a test of her artistic abilities but rather an opportunity for him to gauge her personality and convey to her the point that one must

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<sup>19</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 74.

look for the life inherent within an object. In Haas-Heye's view, fashion could only be grasped by an individual who "feels its wonderful inner harmony, despite all the external, horribly discordant notes."<sup>20</sup> This was the fundamental principle at the heart of his approach to fashion and design. In this sense, the test was meant to determine whether Tanaka could locate the leaf's inner harmony.

Tanaka spent nine months in Zurich before she left to join Kaoru in New York where he had accepted a teaching position in December 1930. Prior to departing for New York, Tanaka spent one month traveling in Germany, visiting friends of Haas-Heye who were among the most renowned designers in Europe. Her focus on these visits was to learn how to make mannequins and how to use them to bring her designs to life. It was a unique and difficult skill that few, if any, Japanese had mastered.

When Tanaka arrived in New York, she enrolled at the Traphagen School of Fashion.<sup>21</sup> Ethel Traphagen, who is credited with introducing women's slacks to the American fashion scene, founded the school in the 1920s. Whereas the focus at Haas-Heye's school had been on design, at Traphagen the focus was on the technical aspects of the fashion industry. Tanaka learned to bring her designs off of the page and create garments in three dimensions. As part of her program, Tanaka worked at a nearby factory on Seventh Avenue where she made clothes for direct sale in local shops. Through this experience, she developed a broad range of sewing skills, from adding pockets and tacking on buttons to cutting fabric and assembling a garment. When

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<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Sherwin Simmons, "Expressionism in the Discourse of Fashion," *Fashion Theory* 4, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>21</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, *50 shū-nen: Tanaka Chiyo Gakuen* (Tokyo: Tokyo Inshokan, 1982). When Tanaka met Pierre Cardin many years later, they discovered that they had been classmates at the Traphagen School.

Tanaka left Japan for Europe she had almost no real sewing experience, but through her work on Seventh Avenue she became a highly capable seamstress.

Also significant during the year Tanaka spent at Traphagen was her exposure to ethnic costumes as a subject of study. In her very first class, school founder Ethel Traphagen lectured on accessories worn by “primitive” peoples. Traphagen was herself an avid collector of ethnic costumes and traveled the world with her husband in search of new items. In her talk, she focused on the function of accessories like necklaces, earrings, and nose rings, explaining that in primitive cultures these items were not worn only for aesthetic purposes. She gave the example of how the clanking noise made by metal accessories alerted tribal leaders when slaves tried to flee. This discussion fascinated Tanaka and expanded the scope of her understanding of clothing and fashion beyond the aesthetic. Tanaka had first taken an interest in ethnic costumes when she and Kaoru were stopped in the port of Colombo on their way to London and she acquired some clothes from the local people there. Traphagen gave Tanaka a framework for understanding ethnic costumes as a window onto people’s customs, religion, and their way of life. Tanaka’s newfound curiosity, coupled with Traphagen’s perspective would spawn a lifelong interest in ethnic costumes and Tanaka would become one of Japan’s leading experts and collectors.

After a total of three years in Europe and the United States, Kaoru was summoned to Kobe to resume his teaching duties. Along the way, Tanaka had demonstrated her sense of independence, become capable in French and English, and pursued her interest in fashion and design by studying with some of the leading figures in the field. By the time she set out to return to Japan, Tanaka had become a skilled seamstress, an expert on fashion history, and she had begun to develop her talent as a designer. What she would do with these skills remained unclear, but she returned to Japan excited and ready to pursue new opportunities.

## Chance Encounter

Tanaka and her husband had reservations on a ship back to Kobe, but it was departing from San Francisco, so they bought a car in New York and spent one month driving across country. When they arrived in San Francisco they sold the car and boarded the ship back to Japan. Prior to boarding, it occurred to Tanaka that she had no clothes that would be suitable for her to wear when she arrived in Japan. After three years in the West, and lots of relocating along the way, Tanaka had discarded (or lost) the clothes she brought with her from Japan and assembled a wardrobe that was decidedly un-Japanese. Tanaka knew that her current wardrobe would not be suitable in Japan, so she decided that she would design and sew a new wardrobe for herself on the journey back home. She purchased fabric in San Francisco and boarded the ship back to Japan.

Once on board, Tanaka borrowed the ship's sewing machine and set up shop on the deck. She attracted considerable attention as she sat there, amid the shuffle boarders and sunbathers, sketching designs and then assembling them with her sewing machine. In what would prove to be a remarkable coincidence, Tanaka drew the attention of a fellow passenger named Mutō Chiseko. As it happened, Mutō's husband, Sanji, had recently retired from his post as president of the Kanebō textile company, one of Japan's largest textile manufacturers at the time, and her son, Itoji, was also high-ranking within the company.<sup>22</sup> Mutō watched Tanaka with interest as she sat on the ship's deck transforming fabric into original designs. Mutō checked in with Tanaka each day to monitor her progress and the two women developed a friendship on the journey. Mutō was concerned that Tanaka might not finish by the time they made it to Kobe. In

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<sup>22</sup> Mutō began working at Kanebō in 1893, serving as company president from 1921-1930. See Yoshiro Miwa and J. Mark Ramseyer, "Corporate Governance in Transitional Economies: Lessons from the prewar Japanese cotton textile industry," *The Journal of Legal Studies* 29, no. 1 (2000), Mutō Sanji, *Watashi no mi no ue banashi* (Sumiyoshimura: Mutō Kinta, 1934).



the end, Tanaka did finish her wardrobe, but she and Kaoru still had to deal with the question of where they would live once they arrived. When Mutō learned of their predicament she spoke with her husband and they arranged for the couple to live in Kanebō's company housing. But Mutō had even bigger ideas for Tanaka. Once in Kobe she went to the new company president Tsuda Shingō with a proposal.

Tsuda was preparing to open Kanebō's first "Service Station" in Osaka in March 1932. The Service Station was to be a company store that sold Kanebō fabrics to local customers. This idea was an attempt by Tsuda to reach out to consumers to market his company's products. Newly on board as company president, Tsuda recognized that in order for Kanebō to improve sales it needed to lead the charge in changing Japanese women's "clothing lifestyle" (*iseikatsu*).<sup>23</sup> In other words, Tsuda not only wanted Tanaka to sell fabric, he wanted her to change Japanese women's practices of dress. In 1932, most Japanese women still felt most comfortable in *wafuku* and they remained intimidated by *yōfuku*. Schoolgirls were accustomed to wearing *yōfuku* uniforms, but they typically wore *wafuku* almost exclusively upon marriage. And many older women (who made up a significant portion of Kanebō's target market) had little or no experience with *yōfuku* – they didn't know how to wear them or buy them, let alone how to make them. Tsuda devised his plan for the Service Station with the aim of reaching out to customers and demystifying *yōfuku*. By showing women how to make and wear *yōfuku*, Tsuda intended to open up a whole new market for his company's fabrics and make Kanebō a leader in Japan's fashion world. With her expertise, her unique background, and her familiarity with both *wafuku* and *yōfuku*, Mutō convinced Tsuda that Tanaka was ideally suited to bringing this vision

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<sup>23</sup> Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 162. See also Nishijima Kyōzō, *Jigyō ō, Tsuda Shingo* (Tokyo: Kyō no mondai-sha, 1938).

to life. Tsuda agreed and invited Tanaka to run the new Service Station, and Tanaka jumped at the chance.

In effect, the idea behind Tsuda's Service Station was not unlike that behind the Miss Shiseido campaign, which also debuted around the same time. Tanaka's role was to reach out to customers and teach them how to incorporate *yōfuku* into their everyday lives in much the same way that Miss Shiseido made cosmetics accessible to her customers. Tanaka embraced the challenge and use her training as a designer and a seamstress to pioneer the role of the fashion designer in Japan. While Tanaka demonstrated a talent for design, it was her attention to the practical elements of dress and her ability to teach women about clothes that ultimately defined her career.

### **The Shop Window**

Tanaka's first task in her new position was to create designs for display in the Service Station's shop window. The space was only big enough for one mannequin, but it gave Tanaka the opportunity to use her creativity to come up with her own original designs that would draw customers into the shop. One of Tanaka's earliest designs was the "new kimono," a two-piece design that combined the practicality and convenience of *yōfuku* with the traditional look of Japan's national costume. Tanaka was accustomed to working with a wide range of fabrics while she was in New York and Europe, but Kanebō's production focused primarily on silk, cotton, and other fabrics that were suitable for making kimono so she had to adjust.<sup>24</sup> The "new kimono" was Tanaka's attempt to appeal to Japanese women's aesthetic preferences while also

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<sup>24</sup> Tanaka explained to readers of popular fashion magazines how to use fabrics available in Japan to produce French designs. For example, see Tanaka Chiyo, "Fasshon shō no tachiba," *Fujin gahō*, May 1937.

allowing them greater movement to meet the demands of their daily lives. When the “new kimono” appeared in Kanebō’s shop window, it attracted considerable attention from local customers and it was very popular among actresses and geisha in Osaka.<sup>25</sup> Not only was the design stylish and new, but it also allowed for greater mobility than the binding kimono.

In many ways, the “new kimono” was an expression of Tanaka’s fundamental approach to fashion. Above all else, she prioritized women’s lived experience of clothes and believed that women should be comfortable. Although she appreciated the kimono for what she called its “quiet beauty,” Tanaka criticized it as a relic of an era long since past and dismissed it as out of step with women’s modern, urban lifestyle.<sup>26</sup> She charged that the kimono in its present form had originated in the Genroku period (1688-1704) and that in spite of the strides that Japan had made in terms of transportation, architecture, the economy, food, technology, agriculture and virtually every other aspect of life, Japanese women’s clothing had failed to advance at a similar pace. As a result, Tanaka took it upon herself in her role as a designer to attempt to modernize women’s fashion and encourage women to wear clothes that met the demands of their daily lives. The “new kimono” was an attempt to bridge that gap between the traditional and the modern, the known and the unknown, by combining the familiar look of kimono with the practicality of *yōfuku*. But Tanaka may have been a bit ahead of her time with this design. While customers were intrigued by the new design, they were not yet ready to wear it. When Tanaka reintroduced the “new kimono,” at her own fashion show in New York in 1950, it became the signature design in her career as a fashion designer.<sup>27</sup> But it held little appeal for Japanese women in 1932.

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<sup>25</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 113.

<sup>26</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, *Shin-josei no yōsō* (Tokyo: Nankōsha, 1933), 7-12.

<sup>27</sup> —, *Kokoro yasashiku ikiru* (Tokyo: Genryūsha, 1982), 135-37, Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 168-69.

In spite of the fact that the “new kimono” did not attract overwhelming sales at Kanebō’s Service Station, Tanaka’s other designs did attract attention. She was constantly changing the display, racing to design and execute dresses and other *yōfuku* garments that would appeal to women in Osaka. Soon there was a steady stream of customers who came to the Service Station in pursuit of Tanaka’s latest designs. The number of women who came into the shop requesting Tanaka’s services in altering their clothes, both *yōfuku* and *wafuku*, increased to the point that Tanaka had to make slips, in small, medium, and large, for customers to use while she was doing their fittings. She even rented space at a beauty salon across the street where women could change and try things on. Eventually, Kanebō created a makeshift fitting room inside the Service Station to meet customer demand.

Although Tanaka was volunteering her services to Kanebō and did not get paid, she worked at a furious pace. She spent three days a week in the shop, typically from 10AM to 9PM, and she was constantly working at home to create new designs.<sup>28</sup> But she welcomed the busy schedule because it gave her the opportunity to do what she truly loved. And at a time when there were concerns about women working outside of the home, Tanaka’s husband fully supported her pursuit and encouraged her to continue to work at the Service Station. By 1933, Tanaka had begun working as a designer for the Hankyū department store in Osaka.<sup>29</sup> She worked with customers to design clothes for specific occasions, and fitted the garments specifically to the individual. Today, this is standard practice for a designer, but at the time there was no precedent in Japan. *Wafuku* did not require a “designer” because they were made from a standard bolt of cloth and did not need to be fitted to the specific contours of an individual’s body. But *yōfuku* required careful measurements and considerable skill to fit garments to a wide

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<sup>28</sup> Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*.

<sup>29</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 122.

range of body types. Tanaka's training in Europe and the United States prepared her for this and she quickly became a pioneer in Japan's fashion world.

By 1935, Tanaka's designs had begun to attract the attention of some of Japan's biggest celebrities. The popular film stars Irie Takako, Hara Setsuko, and Mizutani Yaeko, among others, were fans of Tanaka's work, and Irie appeared on screen in Tanaka's designs in two of her films.<sup>30</sup> That year, Kanebō held a "floor show" (i.e. fashion show) at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo in which they exclusively featured Tanaka's designs. The show introduced a line of Tanaka's designs that Kanebō then featured in its Service Station. Tanaka's success as a designer was one of the primary reasons for the unprecedented success of Kanebō's Service Station and helped to attract both attention and sales. In December of 1935, Kanebō opened a second Service Station in Tokyo's Ginza, and Tanaka appeared once a month at this location as Kanebō's celebrity designer.

### **Teaching Fashion**

Tsuda Shingō was naturally pleased with Tanaka's success because she enhanced Kanebō's visibility and improved sales of the company's fabrics and textiles, and he hoped that Tanaka would succeed in changing women's attitudes about *yōfuku* and educating them in how to make and wear them. Tsuda made it clear to Tanaka that he expected her not only to run the Service Station, but also to make Kanebō a leader in the global fashion industry. These were high expectations, but Tanaka's success at the Service Station certainly was a promising start. Tanaka's designs drew customers in and she helped them purchase the fabrics they needed to reproduce them at home. The most valuable commodity Tanaka had to offer her customers was

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 115-16.

her knowledge of how to make the clothes, and demand for this knowledge rapidly increased as her reputation grew. Many Japanese women of the time learned how to sew kimono either at home or in school home economics (*kateika*) classes, but they often were at a loss when it came to *yōfuku*. In contrast to kimono, which were made from four panels of standard width cloth, *yōfuku* were designed to fit the contours of an individual's body. Tanaka's customers struggled with how to use patterns they found in fashion magazines and "style books" to make clothes for themselves and their family members. Tanaka was more than happy to field questions and demonstrate her techniques to customers in the shop, and not long after she started working at Kanebō she decided to offer regular instruction to interested customers.

In May 1932, Tanaka began offering dressmaking classes from her home in Kobe. There were six women in the initial group, which they called "*Satsukikai*," in reference to the month in which the group began.<sup>31</sup> Tanaka started with two used sewing machines that she purchased with payment she received for the publication of her first book, which was a guide to making children's clothes.<sup>32</sup> The *Satsukikai* quickly grew to twelve students, and by 1934, the number of students interested in learning from Tanaka was so great that she built a makeshift classroom on the grounds of their rental home at Kanebō. In the early days of the *Satsukikai*, Tanaka's approach was informal and everyone joined it for fun, but as demand increased she began to organize formal classes and take her business more seriously. In addition to classes on how to make *yōfuku*, she offered instruction on the concept of trends (*ryūkō*), how to match colors, and when to wear different styles. Tanaka also took students to the floor of Kanebō's factory so they could understand the process of making clothes from beginning to end – from production to design to assembly. In 1936, the Mitsukoshi Department Store invited the *Satsukikai* to display

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 124, Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 181.

<sup>32</sup> *Fujin kodomo yōfuku saihō daikōshūroku*, 6 vols. (Tokyo: Fujin no tomo sha, 1931-1932).

their designs in an exhibit at their Osaka location. Following the success of this show, Mitsukoshi made the *Satsukikai* show an annual event.

By 1937, Tanaka's enrollment had grown to more than 60 students and she had hired four teachers (all former students) to meet the demand. She filed paperwork with Hyogo Prefecture to register as a formal school and in October 1937 the *Satsukikai* became the Tanaka Chiyo Dressmaking Research Institute (*Tanaka Chiyo yōsai kenkyūjo*).<sup>33</sup> Tanaka rented a house nearby to serve as the school's building. Two years later, as the school's enrollment reached more than 200 students, Tanaka managed to take over an abandoned building nearby and used that for more classroom space.

In 1944, at the height of Japan's war involvement and at a time when all things "Western" were deemed unpatriotic, the state informed Tanaka that she would have to remove the term *yōsai* (Western clothes) from the name of her school. She traveled to the prefectural offices in order to challenge this order. She explained to the man behind the desk that the suit that he was wearing was "Western" and that it was the women at her school who made his clothes. In her reasoning, Tanaka highlighted the hypocrisy of the state's wartime clothing policies. In spite of her objections, Tanaka was forced to rename the school the Tanaka Chiyo Fashion Institute (*Tanaka Chiyo ifuku kenkyūjo*).<sup>34</sup>

Although the circumstances of the war eventually forced Tanaka to shut down her school, immediately after Japan's surrender, in 1945, her students begged her to resume classes. Tanaka had recently lost her left eye due to malnutrition during the war, and she and Kaoru had retreated to countryside where they bought an apple farm. Tanaka had no intention of resuming her teaching or her work as a designer, but at the urging of her students she agreed to try to reopen

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<sup>33</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 137.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

the school. Since most people were preoccupied with finding food and shelter, she did not expect that anyone would have time, energy, or means to attend a dressmaking school. Much to Tanaka's surprise, more than 1,000 women lined up at the school's registration desk at Okamoto Station outside of Osaka. Tanaka's school was one of the first of a new wave of dressmaking schools to open in the postwar period.<sup>35</sup> As Japan began the process of rebuilding from the destruction of war, Japanese women were eager to embrace *yōfuku*. By 1951, there were more than 2,400 dressmaking schools across the country with 360,000 students.<sup>36</sup> Tanaka opened numerous branches across the country in the 1950s and 1960s, most of which eventually closed as ready-made clothes became more available and the need to make clothes at home subsequently declined. Today, the Tanaka Chiyo Fashion College remains in Tokyo's Shibuya district as one of the leading fashion institutes in Japan.

## Writing Fashion

Tanaka was a tireless proponent of *yōfuku*. Between her work at Kanebō and her teaching responsibilities, Tanaka was so busy that she typically got only three hours or so of sleep each night. She worked late into the night and afforded herself an hour or two at dinner to spend time with her husband and her son. Although some criticized her ambition and questioned whether her commitment to her work was appropriate for a woman, Tanaka's family supported her in her pursuits. In addition to her work responsibilities, Tanaka also found time to write numerous books and articles on fashion and clothing. In 1932, Tanaka received a request from

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<sup>35</sup> For more on Japan's postwar dressmaking school phenomenon, see Koizumi Kazuko, *Yōsai no jidai: Nihonjin no ifuku kakumei* (Tokyo: OM Shuppan, 2004), Nakayama Chiyo, *Nihon fujin yōsō shi* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kobunkan, 1987), Takahashi Haruko, *Kindai Nihon no shinsō bunka: "shintai to yoso'oi" no bunka henyō* (Tokyo: Sangensha, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Koizumi Kazuko, *Yōsai no jidai: Nihonjin no ifuku kakumei*, 32-39.



her mentor, Hani Motoko, to write the second volume in a series on women and children's *yōfuku*. Hani was co-founder of *Fujin no tomo*, one of Japan's leading women's magazines, and thought that Tanaka was perfect for the job. Although Tanaka had never written anything for publication, she told Hani that she would see what she could come up with once she returned to Japan. Much to her surprise, she found that she had far too much material and far too much to say about the topic for just one volume. Working with Hani, Tanaka put together a volume on children's clothes and then filled the last four volumes in the series with the rest of her material.<sup>37</sup> It was with the money she received for the first volume that Tanaka was able to buy the two used sewing machines for her students in the *Satsukikai* to use.

As Tanaka gained notice through her work at Kanebō, publishers from leading magazines began to line up to have her contribute articles. Among these were *Fujin no tomo*, *Fujin gahō* and *Shufu no tomo*. In 1932, Mutō Sanji, the former president of Kanebō, became president of the Jiji Shinpō and invited Tanaka to write for his newspapers about her remarkable experiences studying fashion abroad. Tanaka accepted the invitation and the newspaper published a daily column for the entire month of August. Many of the articles that Tanaka submitted during this period were an extension of her teaching. She explained in accessible terms the basics of *yōfuku* and her articles addressed a wide range of topics. She wrote a monthly series for *Fujin gahō* on the history of *yōfuku* in the West, beginning with ancient civilizations that included the Greeks, the Byzantines, and the Egyptians.<sup>38</sup> Fashion history had been near and dear to Tanaka's heart since her days in Brighton.

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<sup>37</sup> *Fujin kodomo yōfuku saihō daikōshūroku*. See also Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 129-30.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Tanaka Chiyo, "Saidan kara mita fukushoku-shi," *Fujin gahō*, September 1937, Tanaka Chiyo, "Saidan kara mita fukushoku-shi: Kodai Perusha jidai," *Fujin gahō*, October 1937, Tanaka Chiyo, "Saidan kara mita fukushoku-shi: Ejiputo jidai," *Fujin gahō*,

Tanaka's publications were an extension of her teaching in that they offered practical advice to women about how to make, wear, and understand the intricacies of *yōfuku*.<sup>39</sup> Tanaka understood that *yōfuku* intimidated many Japanese women, and she took great pride in translating her knowledge of *yōfuku* fashion and design into language that they could understand. It was no coincidence that Tanaka's most famous book was a dictionary of fashion terms.<sup>40</sup> The introduction of *yōfuku* to Japan also required the introduction of new language. Tanaka's dictionary was the first of its kind in Japan and has never been out of print. The current volume is 1,285 pages and includes more than 17,000 terms and is a required text at many of Japan's major fashion institutes.<sup>41</sup>

Tanaka began working on the dictionary by accident in 1934, when Tsuda sent her to France to continue her studies. He told her to come back with new fabrics and new ideas that could not be found in Japan. As a student at the renowned Ecole de Guerre-Lavigne, Tanaka struggled to keep pace with all of the French terms used by her instructors. In order to make sense of it all and to overcome her poor language abilities, she had to keep copious notes. During class she would take down terms as quickly as she could, and when she returned home at the end of the day she would use a French-Japanese dictionary to track down the translations. Tanaka later decided to transform these notes into a dictionary for publication to help Japanese women overcome some of the linguistic difficulties that came with learning about *yōfuku*. In

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August 1937, Tanaka Chiyo, "Bizanchin jidai," *Fujin gahō*, September 1938, Tanaka Chiyo, "Saidan kara mita fukushoku-shi: Kodai Girisha jidai," *Fujin gahō*, April 1938.

<sup>39</sup> Tanaka published a collection of her early articles in a 1933 volume: Tanaka Chiyo, *Shin-josei no yōsō*. She published a similar collection of her work in 1936: Tanaka Chiyo, *Shin-yōsō dokuhon* (Tokyo: Nankōsha, 1936).

<sup>40</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, *Fukushoku jiten* (Tokyo: Fujin gahō-sha, 1958).

<sup>41</sup> —, *Shin Tanaka Chiyo fukushoku jiten* (Tokyo: Dōbun shoin, 1991).

1938, she published a shorter version of these notes in glossary form in *Yōsō Guidebook*, and after the war she expanded this to a 600-page dictionary that she published in 1958.<sup>42</sup>

Tanaka's own experience growing up with exposure to both *wafuku* and *yōfuku* enabled her to understand the specific challenges that Japanese women faced as they attempted to make the transition. For example, Tanaka was aware that *yōfuku* color schemes differed from traditional color pairings for *wafuku*, and she was able to explain the differences in very clear terms. In her writing, she provided details about fabrics that were new to Japanese consumers, she broke down the often-complicated undergarments worn with *yōfuku*, and she attempted to decode for readers the rules and etiquette of *yōfuku* accessories like hats, scarves, stockings, gloves, and shoes.<sup>43</sup> Tanaka also helped readers understand when to wear different garments – the differences between an afternoon dress and an evening dress, a sports dress and a housedress, and when a long coat is more appropriate than a short coat. She published numerous articles detailing the basic items every woman should have in her wardrobe, and as the war intensified, she offered advice about how to build a wardrobe on a budget.<sup>44</sup> In short, Tanaka served as a guide for women as they prepared to navigate a vast and complicated sartorial landscape.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> —, *Yōsō gaido bukku* (1938).

<sup>43</sup> —, "Yōsōbi ni hyōjō o tsukuru ni wa: korusetto no hanashi," *Fujin gahō*, December 1937, Tanaka Chiyo, "Yōsō sugata ni hyōjō o tsukuru ni wa: shitagi kara," *Fujin gahō*, November 1937, Tanaka Chiyo, "Yōsōbi ni hyōjō o tsukuru ni wa: korusetto, kutsushita, nikkāsu," *Fujin gahō*, February 1938, Tanaka Chiyo, "Yōsōbi ni hyōjō o tsukuru ni wa: shōto skāto," *Fujin gahō*, January 1938, Tanaka Chiyo, "Kihonteki na wādorōbu," *Fujin gahō*, November 1939, Tanaka Chiyo, "Dezain no benkyō: Karada no ugoki, fuku no ugoki, sen no ugoki," *Fujin gahō*, April 1940, Tanaka Chiyo, "Natsu no yōsō kokoroe-chō," *Fujin gahō*, June 1940, Tanaka Chiyo, "Senjika no ifuku," in *Shin-taisei kokumin kōza*, ed. Asahi Shinbunsha (1941).

<sup>44</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, "Ifuku sekkei no konpon," *Fujin gahō*, January 1943, Tanaka Chiyo, "Sekkei aru iseikatsu," *Fujin gahō*, August/September 1944.

<sup>45</sup> For an excellent example of the detail of Tanaka's instruction, see Tanaka Chiyo and Itō Mohei, "Seifuku o nuide: dai-ippo no yōsō sekkei," *Fujin gahō*, April 1939.

In addition to decoding *yōfuku* for her readers, Tanaka also focused her attention on issues relating to the physical experience of wearing *yōfuku*, which was puzzling and intimidating for many of her readers. Whereas the kimono was designed to conceal the lines of a woman's body, *yōfuku* tended to be more closefitting and were designed to highlight the natural curves of a woman's body. While kimono restricted women to short steps and prohibited her from bending naturally from the waist, *yōfuku* allowed for greater mobility and freedom of movement. There was also a whole new set of rules and etiquette that came with *yōfuku*, such as figuring out how to move in a short skirt without revealing one's undergarments.<sup>46</sup> Understandably, Japanese women who were not accustomed to wearing *yōfuku* were hesitant and self-conscious at first. But Tanaka addressed these concerns by explaining in concrete terms how to wear the different articles as well as how to move in them. For example, she described how to walk in high heels, how not to expose one's slip while walking, and how to sit gracefully in a dress.<sup>47</sup>

Tanaka's approach to fashion was characterized by her interest in the tastes and preferences of the individual wearing the clothes. This approach distinguished her from many of her contemporaries whose primary interest was in how fashion could contribute to Japan's national and imperial interests. Tanaka distanced herself from this kind of approach as early as 1933, when she explicitly stated that she was interested in women's subjective experience of fashion. She specifically took issue with Kon Wajirō's "objective" (*kyakkanteki*) or "scientific" (*kagakuteki*) study of fashion because it failed to take into account the experience of the

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<sup>46</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, "Yōsōbi ni hyōjō o tsukuru ni wa: shōto skāto."

<sup>47</sup> For other examples, see —, "Yōsōbi ni hyōjō o tsukuru ni wa: korusetto no hanashi.", Tanaka Chiyo, "Dezain no benkyō," *Fujin gahō* 1939.

individual.<sup>48</sup> Kon famously sat on Tokyo street corners and compiled statistics on what Japanese people were wearing. For Kon, this method enabled him to quantify Japanese modernity, and he has since been regarded as one of the foremost (and most frequently cited) experts on Japanese modernity and fashion. Kon established the discipline of “modernology” (with Yoshida Kenkichi), which used the scientific method to study the everyday practices of people in Tokyo.<sup>49</sup> But in Kon’s approach there was no place for the individual. The individual disappeared into her clothes and she became little more than a statistic or, in Kon’s case, a sketch. The same was true in *wafuku* vs. *yōfuku* debates. Discussions about what women should wear centered on concerns about cultural identity and what was at stake for the nation/empire and invariably overlooked the needs and tastes of the individuals wearing the clothes. These discussions reduced women to objects that could be manipulated for the sake of national/imperial interests.

By contrast, Tanaka’s “subjective” (*shukanteki*) study of fashion focused on the experience of the individual woman inside the clothes.<sup>50</sup> She fiercely disagreed with suggestions that Japanese women should wear kimono for the sake of the nation or Japanese tradition. Tanaka maintained that one could come to the conclusion that this was a good idea only if one ignored the experience of the individual. She criticized the kimono as a relic and called it unsuitable for women’s modern lives. In her view, women’s clothes had failed to modernize at

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<sup>48</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, *Shin-josei no yōsō*, 1. For examples of Kon’s approach to women’s fashion, see Kon Wajirō, “Ginza no yōfuku,” *Asahi Graph*, 27 April 1932, Kon Wajirō, “Sensō to onna no fukusō, donna henka ga okoru ka?,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, 22 October 1937, Kon Wajirō, “Kindai josei fukusō dangi,” *Chūō kōron*, June 1938, Kon Wajirō, “Jihen to ryūkō no shōrai,” *Hifuku* 9, no. 1 (1938), Kon Wajirō, *Kon Wajirō shū*, 9 vols. (Tokyo: 1971), Kon Wajirō, Yoshida Kenkichi, and Nii Itaru, “The Capital’s Diverse Styles,” *Asahi graph*, 2 November 1932.

<sup>49</sup> Miriam Rom Silverberg, “Constructing the Japanese Ethnography of Modernity,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 51, no. 1 (1992): 36-39.

<sup>50</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, *Shin-josei no yōsō*, 2-8.

the same pace as the rest of society, and she suggested that this was due in part to the fact that women were too frequently taken as objects in discussions of clothes. Why, she wondered, could even the most patriotic of men wear *yōfuku* on a daily basis, including soldiers, politicians, and bureaucrats, while women were expected to wear outdated, restrictive, and impractical kimono “for the nation?” Tanaka described her own approach as “subjective” because it focused on the individual’s experience of fashion as well as her tastes and preferences. As a result, while Tanaka herself preferred *yōfuku*, she understood that some women preferred kimono for certain activities, but wanted them to have both the freedom and the knowledge to wear *yōfuku* when it made sense to do so – for shopping or riding city buses, for example. In her teaching and in her writing, Tanaka sought to empower women by educating them and providing them with the knowledge and information necessary to make informed decisions about their wardrobes.

### **Ethnic Costumes**

In May 1936, Kanebō sent Tanaka to Seoul to oversee the opening of a fashion show at the company’s new Service Station. The Service Station had opened a few months earlier, in March, and was Kanebō’s first outlet in the empire.<sup>51</sup> When Tsuda hired Tanaka in 1932, he told her that it was her job to help make Kanebō a leader in the global fashion industry.<sup>52</sup> In four years at Kanebō, Tanaka had played an influential role in improving the company’s sales by changing Japanese women’s perceptions of *yōfuku* and teaching them how to make and wear

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<sup>51</sup> This was Kanebō’s third Service Station. It also opened a branch in Ginza in 1935, and Tanaka traveled to the Ginza store once a month to oversee operations there. Kanebō, *Kanebō hyakunenshi* (Osaka: Kanebō Kabushiki Kaisha, 1988), Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 115.

<sup>52</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 121-22.

them through her teaching and her writing. In sending Tanaka to Seoul, Kanebō hoped that she would help the company gain a foothold in the Korean market.

The purpose of the fashion show was to encourage Korean women to use colorful and patterned fabrics to make all kinds of clothes – *wafuku*, *yōfuku*, and Korean.<sup>53</sup> The clothes at the show were Tanaka's designs, and she was on hand to answer questions from audience members and offer advice and instruction. The Japanese government in Korea had already taken steps to discourage Korean people from wearing white as part of a systematic attempt to wipe out Korean culture and tradition. Kanebō looked to capitalize on this development by pushing non-white fabrics on Korean consumers. While Tanaka oversaw the fashion show, she also took the opportunity to travel to the Korean countryside and talked with Korean women about their clothing preferences and their everyday lives. Tanaka reported in *Fujin gahō* that contrary to claims by the Japanese government that white clothes were a burden to Korean women because they were impractical and required constant cleaning, the women she spoke to said that doing laundry gave them a welcome escape from the home and allowed them to socialize with neighbors. Furthermore, the women preferred white clothes and told Tanaka that white was a symbol of Korean culture and tradition that they held very dear to their hearts. Although Tanaka was supporting the project of persuading Koreans to give up their traditional clothing practices by opening the fashion show, her reporting was evidence of her cultural sensitivity and curiosity about other cultures.

Two years later, in July 1938, Tanaka traveled with her husband to Indonesia and the Philippines for three months. Kaoru, an economic geographer, received funding to do his own research while Tanaka was sent by Kanebō and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry

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<sup>53</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, "Chosen dayori," *Fujin gahō*, July 1936.

(*Shōkōshō*) to conduct ethnographic research and explore trade opportunities for Japanese companies. Her mission was to collect information about local cultural practices, traditions, and tastes in order to improve Japanese companies' ability to appeal to consumers in foreign/colonial markets.

Before Tanaka left for the South Pacific, Tsuda summoned her to his office and asked her, "How many people in the world are naked?"<sup>54</sup> Tanaka was taken aback by this question at first, but she quickly realized that Tsuda was interested in knowing how big the potential market was for Kanebō fabrics. He wanted to know how many people in the world did not routinely wear anything on their upper bodies so he could target those regions and introduce indigenous people to the practice of wearing shirts and blouses. In Indonesia and the Philippines, Tanaka traveled to remote villages on numerous islands to speak to locals and learn about their daily lives and their preferences in colors, patterns, styles, and fabrics. She reported on her travels directly to Kanebō, the state, and also in popular magazines. For example, she explained to readers of *Fujin gahō* that locals in Bali were concerned that their traditional dyeing techniques were being wiped out by rapid urbanization and industrialization brought on by their European (mainly Dutch) colonizers. While Europeans encouraged them to wear Western clothes they still preferred traditional styles. Tanaka listened to what locals had to say and advised Japanese corporations to exercise cultural sensitivity in marketing to local consumers. For example, rather than trying to sell fabrics with cherry blossom prints, Tanaka explained that Japanese companies would likely have more success appealing to local consumers if they sold fabrics that featured indigenous

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<sup>54</sup> Nishimura Katsu, *Tanaka Chiyo: Nippon saisho no dezainā monogatari*, 121, Tanaka Chiyo, *Kokoro yasashiku ikiru*, 205-09, Tanaka Chiyo and Ogawa Tsuneko, *Yume shigoto: Tanaka Chiyo no sekai*, 234.



designs, such as dragons, snakes and birds.<sup>55</sup> In her view, demonstrating cultural sensitivity would be more effective than forcing Japanese designs and styles on colonial people.<sup>56</sup> Tanaka reported that local people in Java and Batavia viewed the Japanese as benevolent rulers in contrast to their European colonizers who had little regard for their culture, history, and traditions, and she believed that Japan could enhance its position in the eyes of the locals by tailoring products to their tastes and preferences.<sup>57</sup> Tanaka's willingness to talk with individuals and her interest in their experiences gave her a unique perspective that helped Japanese companies and the state expand into the South Seas.

On this same trip, Tanaka also conducted research at a museum in Batavia that was known for its collection of ethnic costumes from around the world. Tanaka had maintained an interest in ethnic costumes since her days at the Traphagen School and was excited to have the opportunity to learn more about them and to see samples first-hand. She met with the curator who introduced her to the collection, including explanations about the history, production, and use of each item. Tanaka took copious notes and made detailed drawings of each of the designs he showed her, noting details about colors, patterns, styles, and how and when each article should be worn. These experiences helped Tanaka become one of Japan's leading experts on ethnic costumes in the South Seas.

In May 1940, the Japanese state once again called on Tanaka as a clothing expert and experienced traveler. By this time, Tanaka was director of the new Japan Clothing Research Institute (*Nippon ifuku kenkyūjo*) at Osaka University. This organization specialized in research

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<sup>55</sup> "Nanpō ifuku o dō suru ka," *Kokuminfuku* 2, no. 7 (1942): 25.

<sup>56</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, "Nanpō no ifuku," *Ifuku kenkyū* 3, no. 5 (1943): 35.

<sup>57</sup> —, "Jaba dayori: Jaba ni tsuite sūjitsu," *Fujin gahō*, October 1938, Tanaka Chiyo, "Nankai no fukushoku o miru," *Fujin gahō*, November 1938, Tanaka Chiyo, "Nanpō no ifuku."

on ethnic costumes, women's work clothes, and the "national uniform" (*kokuminfuku*).<sup>58</sup> Tanaka was a natural fit for director because of her experience studying costumes in the South Seas as well as her knowledge of both fashion history and modern design. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs requested that Tanaka travel the globe in her capacity as director to promote goodwill and cultural exchange on behalf of the Japanese state.<sup>59</sup> Tanaka traveled alone and stopped at ports in Hong Kong, Singapore, South Asia, Eastern Africa, Cape Town, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Panama, and Los Angeles.<sup>60</sup> At each stop, Tanaka exchanged clothes with local people, presenting them with samples of *wafuku* in return for examples of their traditional dress. She sometimes ventured far from the major ports to visit tiny villages, and she enjoyed talking with local people.

One of Tanaka's primary tasks on this journey was to bring back ideas that might be of use in designing the national uniform. The state was interested in learning about alternative materials (primarily plants that could be cultivated domestically in Japan's climate) that could be used to make clothes and help Japan manage its dwindling resources. Tanaka also looked into styles that could be implemented at home, as well as design ideas that could help Japanese people cope with the climate and environment when they were abroad. When Tanaka returned to Japan, the items that she had collected were displayed in an Osaka exhibit to familiarize Japanese with the cultures of the world.

Through her extensive travel and research around the world, Tanaka became one of Japan's foremost experts on ethnic costumes. Her approach to ethnic costumes was consistent with her views on Japanese women's fashion in that she had a genuine concern for the individual

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<sup>58</sup> For an example of the Institute's findings, see Tanaka Chiyo, "Nippon ifuku kenkyūjo ihō," ed. Tanaka Chiyo (Osaka: Nippon ifuku kenkyūjo, 1941).

<sup>59</sup> —, *Watashi no ifuku kenkyū* (Tokyo: Fujin gahō-sha, 1948), 116-23.

<sup>60</sup> For a map of Tanaka's travels during the prewar period, see the opening pages of *Ibid.*

wearing the clothes. Although the purpose of her trips abroad was to acquire knowledge and information about local customs and practices for the state and for Japanese companies, Tanaka's writings about her travels reveal her talent for ethnography and her remarkable degree of cultural sensitivity. Whether she was interviewing Korean women doing laundry on the riverbank or talking with Balinese villagers about their dyeing techniques, Tanaka demonstrated interest in and concern for individual people's lives and experiences. In much the same way that Tanaka's voice functioned as a counterpoint to critics who argued that Japanese women should wear kimono for the sake of the nation, her perspective on indigenous people's lives and clothes stood out against discourses that tended to objectify colonial others.

Tanaka's sensitivity for the individual was evident both in articles she wrote for popular magazines about her travels and local clothing practices, as well as through her service on state-organized committees charged with shaping wartime clothing policies. She was a frequent contributor to *Kokuminfuku*, the Army's journal on clothing policy and research, and she was invited to participate in roundtable discussions and serve on committees as the resident expert on ethnic costumes. Tanaka served alongside figures like Kon Wajirō on committees tasked with designing the national uniform for men and she was an outspoken opponent of a similar uniform for women. While Tanaka supported the effort to conserve resources for the sake of the nation, she vehemently opposed the notion that women should be confined to a single uniform. Tanaka was opposed to uniforms in general, including school uniforms, and encouraged women to exercise freedom in choosing their own clothes.<sup>61</sup> As for the idea of a "national" or "standard" uniform, Tanaka believed that Japanese women could be "Japanese" by choosing the clothes they liked and that made the most sense to them. In Tanaka's view, requiring women to wear

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<sup>61</sup> Tanaka Chiyo and Itō Mohei, "Seifuku o nuide: dai-ippo no yōsō sekkei."

*wafuku* or a “national” uniform would only signal to the world that Japan had not yet become a modern society. She believed that providing women with the information about various styles of clothing and giving them the freedom to choose what they wanted to wear was the surest way for Japan to show that it was truly a modern imperial power.<sup>62</sup>

## Conclusion

Tanaka Chiyo’s work as a designer, a teacher, a writer, and an entrepreneur was influential in shaping Japanese women’s ideas about *yōfuku* and their practices of dress in the 1930s and 1940s. In fact, it was her postwar activities that defined her career. Tanaka became best known for her work as the designer for the imperial household, a title she held from 1952 to 1959.<sup>63</sup> Tanaka Chiyo dressmaking schools stretched across the country in the 1950s and 1960s, she edited her own monthly fashion magazine for nearly twenty years, she worked as a judge for the Miss Universe pageant, and she appeared frequently on television as a fashion commentator and critic.<sup>64</sup> Tanaka developed an international reputation by opening fashion shows in New York, Paris, and countless other cities around the world, and she developed lasting friendships with many of the leading fashion designers in the world, among them Pierre Cardin, Christian Dior, and Pierre Balmain.<sup>65</sup> She would also become one of the world’s foremost experts on and collectors of ethnic costumes. When Tanaka died, in 1999, her collection had grown to more

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<sup>62</sup> Tanaka Chiyo, *Sōi to ifuku* (Tokyo: Senba shoten, 1943), 2.

<sup>63</sup> —, *Kōgō-sama no dezainā: mōdo zuihitsu* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 1955).

<sup>64</sup> Tanaka’s magazine, “*Fukusō (COSTUME)*” was published by Fujin Seikatsu-sha from June 1957 to March 1974.

<sup>65</sup> In 1982, Tanaka published a collection of writings by the designers she had met over the course of her career. The names she includes constitute a veritable who’s who of the fashion industry. See Tanaka Chiyo, *Sekai no fukushoku dezainā: watakushi no atta natsukashī hitotachi to sono sakuhin* (Tokyo: Genryū-sha, 1982), Tanaka Chiyo, *Tanaka Chiyo zuihitsu: besuto doressā e no shōtai* (Tokyo: Fujin Seikatsu-sha, 1966), 119-56.

than 6,000 items, all of which were donated to Japan's National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka.<sup>66</sup>

Tanaka was a visionary and a pioneer in the world of Japanese fashion. She took advantage of the opportunity that Kanebō gave her and made herself into Japan's first fashion designer. She also helped to transform Japanese women's practices of dress by promoting *yōfuku* and giving them the knowledge to make their own choices about the clothes they wore. Although Tanaka repeatedly resisted suggestions that she was a feminist, she challenged traditional feminine norms through her work and her own life choices. As a woman with both a family and a successful career, Tanaka embodied the spirit of independence that she had learned from Hani, Yosano, and others; through her designs, her teaching, and her publications she demonstrated a tireless commitment to achieving gender equality. While she expressed no interest in disrupting the traditional gender roles that were foundational to prewar and wartime Japanese society, by giving women the knowledge and the tools to make informed decisions about the clothes they wore, Tanaka fashioned herself as an influential advocate for women's independence.

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<sup>66</sup> Kubo Masatoshi and Takahashi Haruko, eds., *Tanaka Chiyo korekushon: sekai no minzokufuku to Nihon no yōsō 100-nen*, Minpaku Hakken (Osaka: Senri Bunka Zaidan, 2002). Tanaka also published widely on ethnic costumes, often co-authoring with her husband Kaoru. For examples, see Tanaka Chiyo, *Sekai no minzoku isō* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1985), Tanaka Kaoru and Tanaka Chiyo, *Genshoku sekai ifuku daizukan*, 7th ed. (Osaka: Hoikusha, 1978).

## Conclusion

In 2007, veteran filmmaker Yamada Yōji, best known for his “Tora-san” film series, released his 80<sup>th</sup> film, *Kabei: Our Mother*, which was featured at the 58<sup>th</sup> Berlin Film Festival. The film is set in Tokyo in the early 1940s and tells the story of the Nogami family from the point of view of the youngest daughter, Teruyo.<sup>1</sup> The film begins with Teruyo’s father Shigeru, a professor of German literature, being whisked away by the police, accused of being a Communist. This leaves Teruyo’s mother, Kayo, to take care of her two daughters and keep the household in order while her husband remains in prison, which she does with remarkable calm and dignity. While the film tells the story of how Kayo manages to lead the family through the darkest moments of the war, with plenty of help from neighbors and extended family, it is most notable for its depiction of everyday life in wartime Japan.

For my purposes, the film is valuable because it offers a visual representation of how people looked in wartime Japan. Men, children, and young, unmarried women appear primarily in *yōfuku*, while Kayo and other middle-aged women wear kimono for most of the film, except in summer when they don the cooler *appappa*. By the end of the film, when wartime conditions are at their most severe, Kayo has resorted to *monpe*, the loose-fitting pants that became women’s default “national uniform.” In one important scene that takes place in the spring of 1942, Kayo and her daughters venture downtown where they encounter a group of angry protesters who yell at women for wearing cosmetics and *yōfuku*, chanting one of the defining slogans of the era, “Luxury is the enemy!” (*zeitaku wa teki da!*), and branding them “unpatriotic” (*hikokumin*). Near the end of the film, after Shigeru has died in prison, Kayo appears sitting in front of her vanity applying makeup as she prepares to go retrieve her husband’s body.

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<sup>1</sup> The film is based on Nogami’s memoir: Teruyo Nogami, *Kābē*, 1st ed. (Tokyo: Chūō kōron shinsha, 2007).

Fashion and cosmetics are not major themes in the film; in fact, they constitute part of the backdrop of the story. But these everyday items are nevertheless critical details that help tell the story of life in wartime Japan. In a 2008 interview, Yamada explained that capturing the essence of everyday life was one of his objectives in making the film: “There aren’t many films about that specific time. The movies made in the 1940s had to pass military censors, so they don’t express any reality. The movies made after 1945 are also lacking in that they don’t portray the lives of ordinary people during wartime.”<sup>2</sup>

Yamada’s comments point to some of the difficulties in capturing the realities of daily life and, by extension, Japanese women’s experiences of war. Feminist historians have struggled with this very point because women have, as McClintock has argued, been “exiled from the archive.”<sup>3</sup> In response, recent work in feminist history has focused on domesticity, consumption, material culture, and the body, among other themes, as a means of inserting women into historical narratives. According to Burton: “Feminist historians...have long used unconventional sources – letters, diaries, ephemera of various kinds – to write women’s experiences (back) into history, and in doing so have tried to establish an alternative archive from which to challenge exclusionary local, national, and colonial histories.”<sup>4</sup> In this dissertation, I have focused on fashion and cosmetics, items not typically included in the archive, in order to gain access to how women and gender constituted Japan’s imperial regime.

By examining discourses on women’s clothes from the 1920s through the early 1940s I have shown how clothes and cosmetics functioned as an important technology of empire, and

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Schilling, "Yoji Yamada: Voice of dissent revives forgotten war memories," *The Japan Times*, 31 January 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 192.

<sup>4</sup> Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women writing house, home, and history in late colonial India* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 23.

demonstrated how Japan's semicolonial relationship with the West and the fact of empire shaped Japanese culture "at home." Through talk about what women should wear and how they should look, experts and social critics imagined a Japanese cultural identity that distinguished it from Western imperial powers and helped Japan establish its cultural authority vis-à-vis its colonies. Significantly, these debates centered on women and their bodies.

Returning to Mani's observations about women in the discourse on *sati* in colonial India, she writes: "Neither subject, nor object, but ground – such is the status of women in the discourse on *sati*."<sup>5</sup> While I think that this overstates the case in the discourses on women's appearance, since Japanese women sometimes were subjects and often had agency in choosing what clothes they wore, Mani's point is nevertheless pertinent here. Generally speaking, Japanese women *were* objects in discourses on fashion and cosmetics, and male and female critics alike struggled to negotiate between a nostalgic desire for the traditional woman and a progressive longing for the modern woman. It was precisely this ambivalence and anxiety that characterized Japan's quest to establish imperial authority, and I argue that this was the effect of Japan's unique position as a non-Western modern imperial power.

But women also had the capacity to push back against attempts to control what they wore and how they looked. The ultimate failure of the "standard women's" uniform project was due, in part, to women's reluctance to embrace the state-endorsed designs. In the end, the state encouraged women to wear *monpe*, an easy order to follow because the women themselves had already established it as their default "national uniform" out of personal taste and necessity. In Korea as well, women used clothing as a source of resistance against Japan's colonial regime as they refused to conform to colonial clothing reforms. And Miss Shiseido and Tanaka Chiyo

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<sup>5</sup> Lata Mani, "Contentious Traditions: The debate on SATI in colonial India," *Cultural Critique* 7 (1987): 153.



were models of the independent, working woman who challenged the boundaries of conventional feminine norms but stopped short of radically reconfiguring the gendered social order that undergirded Japanese imperial society. While none of these women seriously threatened Japan's imperial project, they nevertheless illustrate how women as subjects actively shaped Japan's cultural identity; their reality ultimately contributed to discursive representations of femininity and "Japaneseness."

My intention here is not to celebrate Japanese exceptionalism; quite to the contrary, one of the aims of this project is to situate Japan within the context of a global system of colonialism. Studies of empire typically focus on European imperialisms, while studies of Japan tend to exclude empire altogether. My objective has been to move away from the kind of "island histories" that isolate Japan from its empire by demonstrating the ways in which Japanese domestic culture was fundamentally imperial. At the same time, by articulating the overlaps and commonalities that Japan shares with other modern empires, I call attention to the ways in which the Japan example can enhance understandings of how power is articulated under imperial conditions across empires. By exposing the role that discourses on women's clothes and cosmetics played in the ideological work of Japanese imperialism, I have demonstrated that imperialism took place not just in the Diet, in schools, and in government offices, not to mention in the colonies, but also in wardrobes and closets and the pages of fashion magazines. In this sense, I have shown how culture and everyday practices were the very grounds upon which empires were fashioned.

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